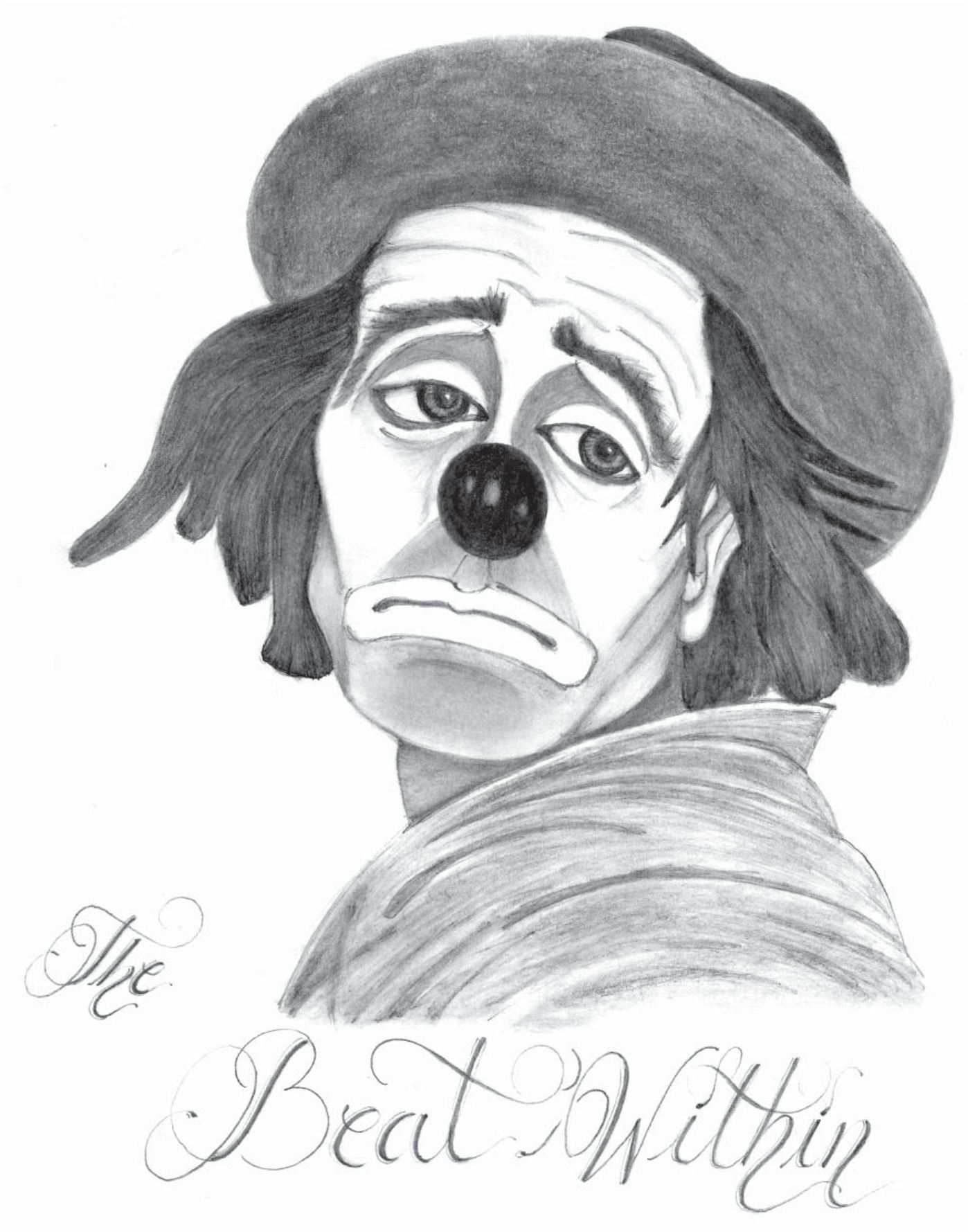
The
Beat Within

EDITOR'S NOTE VOLUME 11.33

A week ago, the banner headline in Sunday's San Francisco Chronicle (August 20) screamed: TEEN SLAYINGS ROCK OAKLAND. The article itself paints a picture of devastation: 88 murders in the city of Oakland so far this year and almost one out of every three a teenager! The reasons given for this ongoing killing field are, by now, familiar (certainly to anyone reading The Beat): battles over turf, drug wars, gang wars, and the easy accessibility of guns, and a willingness to use them for the most minor of reasons.

None of this is new, of course, but the statistics — and the stories of individual loss behind them — are both frightening and tragic. But what is equally frightening (and even more tragic) is the political response that offers nothing more than what will benefit them. They are, like the drug dealers on the street, out for their own power and control. The Mayor of Oakland, Jerry Brown — who was twice Governor of the State of California and three times a candidate for President of the United States — is now running for state Attorney General, the highest law enforcement officer in California. There is little doubt that he will be elected to the post. So, the thinking he brings to this plague that is eroding our cities from the inside out is of interest to all. And what is his thinking? More repression, more police, more prison, more, more, more. In short, no thinking at all!

In the article, the Attorney-General-To-Be notes that, "It is tragic that a teenager is so disconnected from society that he would open fire on a police officer," (as if the tragedy is magnified when the intended victim is a police officer and not "just another teenager"). His "solution" to the tragedy of teenage murder and victimization helps to explain why the problem continues to get worse: "But it shows," he says, as if he's about to announce something new, something that hasn't been uttered by every other politician who ever ran for higher office, "that there are some people even at that young age that must be taken of the streets, perhaps forever." And that's it. That's the solution... more of the same, more, more, more. What it really "shows" is that politicians — even those as seasoned as this former governor and candidate for President — are as bankrupt of ideas as the children engaged in this ongoing war are of hope. It is not enough to note in passing that teenagers are disconnected from society, then propose locking them up as the solution. How does that connect them to society? How do we connect children to a society so willing to dispose of them, "perhaps for life?"

The point was made again this morning (Monday) in a front-page story in the Los Angeles Times (August 21), titled, "Reform Is Locked Out of Juvenile Hall." The first paragraph of this story tell it all: "For more than a decade, Los Angeles County's governing supervisors have been repeatedly warned about problems in the county's mammoth detention system for juvenile offenders. But despite at least 16 studies, investigations or audits since 1998 — exposing serious deficiencies with schooling, mental health services and basic safety — the county's elected leaders have done little to meaningfully improve California's largest juvenile detentions system, records show."

If we thought that Mayor Brown (a Democrat) or Governor Schwarzenegger (a Republican) — or any other politician running for office — really cared about these children as much as he cares about his own election, we would urge him to read a book called "There Are No Children Here," by Alex Kotlowitz. This non-fiction exposé is set in the crumbling projects of Chicago, but it could be set in any city in America. It follows two brothers for two years of their lives, revealing the appalling level of degrading circumstances in which they are forced to live. On one hand, the drug dealers and gangbangers make life intolerable for all who want to live peacefully and move out of the third-world conditions they are forced to endure. On the other hand, the police approach all as if they were animals to be degraded, humiliated and even killed, while the politicians use the debased conditions of their lives to enrich themselves and reach for higher office. It is not a book about solutions, but without understanding (or caring about) the reality it describes, there can be no solutions. Depressingly, this book was written in 1991 — fifteen years ago! These are not new problems, and yet the "solutions" that come out of the mouths of our so-called leaders are tired and worn and empty slogans.

But this book offers more than just a predictably depressing story (though it is terribly depressing). It offers a glimmer of hope that comes not from the leadership class (they are a lost cause, a group of self-serving, power-hungry egotists who offer nothing more than wagging tongues and pointing fingers), but through the desperate efforts by one child or another, by one mother or another, to break the mold, to refuse to accept that life that is dealt them, to grasp any straw that might allow them to climb out of hell. The two brothers in "There Are No Children Here" come from a large family. The father wants to be a father, but falls victim to drugs and alcohol, and though he hates himself for failing his children, fail them he does. Their mother desperately does what she must to keep her family together. An older brother falls victim to the streets and goes to prison. Dear friends and classmates are shot and killed, sometimes as intended victims, sometimes as accidental ones. And the two brothers adapt to their world, one by refusing to grow up, the other by shutting out all outward signs of emotion. In some situations, their accommodations to the world they must negotiate might be viewed as clinically mentally ill, but in these circumstances, if "survival of the fittest" means anything, what they do to survive makes them among the fittest of all. In an insane world, what is sanity? (One can only imagine how a Jerry Brown or Arnold Schwarzenegger or any of the other privileged and spoiled politicians who claim the mantle of leadership would survive in similar circumstances...)

The point for us — for our family that we call The Beat Within — is one we've made many times before: The system and those who run it will not change, will not admit their own failures, their own bankruptcy of spirit and ideas, will not acknowledge their complicity in the violence and death they claim to find so shocking. And since they will not change (as long as there is another election to win), there is only one kind of change that matters, only one effort worth encouraging, and that is your effort, your change. "There Are No Children Here" proves that, even with failure along the way, we are capable of changing our own thinking and walking a different path — different from what our older brothers, uncles, mothers and fathers have walked, and different from what our politicians so casually toss off as "tragic." Without that individual change, there is no hope at all. For those at the bottom, for those who cried out to be saved from the ravages of Hurricane Katrina (and the hurricanes of violence that tear apart cities like Oakland, San Francisco, East Palo Alto and so many more across this, the richest country in the world), the government has failed. And so it is up to you. It is up to us.

The questions that should haunt all who claim to be leaders of America were put best by the great African-American poet, Langston Hughes, in a poem titled "Harlem" in 1951. Observing the conditions of life in the New York City ghetto in which he lived, Hughes asked:

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun
Or fester like a sore—
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over—
Like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

With all that in mind, lets segue into the topics that were addressed in the workshops leading up to the terrific writing featured in this issue. The first topic, "Can You Hate Someone You Don't Know?" -This week, The Beat wants to know if you can hate a person you don't know, a person that you've never even met. We ask you this question because every week we read about "enemies" without any explanations of what makes a complete stranger an enemy. If you say that you can hate someone without knowing him or her, explain to us what the basis of your hate is. Are there people that don't know you who hate you? Why? Where does hate come from? If you're having some difficulty trying to understand this question, turn it inside out and ask yourself if you can love someone you don't know. Either way, we want to know how such feelings are possible. We can understand feeling strong emotions — both hate and love — towards people that you know, but how can you feel so those same emotions for people you don't know?

Our second topic, "Where Have You Been And Where Are You Going?" -We have mixed feelings about coming up here and doing workshops with you each week. We enjoy being able to meet all of you, and we are always interested in what you have to say. But there's a part of us that gets sad seeing y'all in this sticky situation. So this week we're going to focus on something else...

Get your mind off where you are right now. We know it's hard, but just try. Think about your past: where have you been? What memories stick out the most in your mind, good or bad? What has made you the person you are today?

Now then, think about the future. Where are you going? What path will you choose to take and how will you walk it? Will you reach your goal? We know that no one knows what's going to happen until it does, but use your imaginations and let us know where you've been and where you're going.

And our last tropic, "Describe Your Biggest Disappointment In Life" -Life is full of ups and downs for everyone, whether you're locked up or not. So tell us what your biggest disappoint in life has been. (And remember, you have lots of time left to balance this disappointment with actions and accomplishments that can bring great satisfaction in your future...)

Before we announce our POW (Piece Of the Week) winners, lets remind you serious writers, that the time is now to consider submitting a piece to our 16th editorial note writing contest! The topic to consider is, "A Letter To The President." For this contest we want you serious writers to write a letter to President Bush! It is our goal to not only post these letters in The Beat Within publication and our website, but to send them off to the White House too! Now, do we need to suggest topics on what to talk about? Doubt it. So with this said, our contest question is all about you writing a letter to President Bush.

The deadline, deadline will be Election Day, Tuesday, November 7, 2006. As is the case with all of our writing contests, that all pieces submitted will be featured in the BWO (Beat WithOut) section of the "big" Beat over several issues. And once all featured, The Beat editors will read and vote on their four favorites. From these reads, our top-vote-getter will receive a one-hundred-dollar money order. Our second place winner will get a fifty-dollar money order. And our third and fourth place winners will receive twenty-five-dollar money orders. Good luck writers!

Ok, lets give praise to this week's POW recipients, they are Mo Love or No Love, Big Vic who has three, Sebastian, Brittney, Ally Bo Lil' Sam, and Joe all from the 150 Crew. Also from SF/YGC we have, Reese-C-Cup, Zoltan, Meen and Goofy. Awesome writers! You all step up huge!

On a very sad note, as this very special Beat Within is going to print, the headline in Tuesday's San Francisco Chronicle (August 29) reads: "5 are shot dead on city streets in a single night Police officers kill one suspect -- city urged to declare a crisis. The killings brought San Francisco's homicide total for the year to 62 -- a pace that if continued would about reach last year's total of 96, which was the city's bloodiest year in a decade." Forty-seven people had been killed by this time in 2005; the end of the year saw a surge of homicides that brought the total to a 10-year high. Of equal concern, in another article the headline reads, "Two shot to death in East Oakland, bringing the city's homicide count to 95 and surpassing last year's final total of 94..."

With all this grief and sadness we face day to day, let's dedicate this issue to those of you with the desire to change; may you actually act upon it and change for the better. Amen.

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The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our commuities already–we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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www.thebeatwithin.org

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To The Youngsters

I lived my life seventeen years, day and night I walked the streets of Oakland with my cousin. I saw things on my block I had never expected to see, and I did things I never in my life thought I would do.

Now I'm 17 years old and I'm about to spend almost half of my adult life in jail, with people I know and don't know.

My home is the turf because they cared about me more than my mom and older sister did.

I never went home. Me and my cousins and sis stayed on the block all night long until we felt like we wanted to go home. Me and my sister and cousin stayed on the block chilling and drinking, smoking and drinking bo' and throwing our lives away.

Five years from now I see myself in a prison trying to get big or trying to get prepared for the worst that can happen to me in prison.

I just want to tell all you youngsters to change your life while you got the time .

-Mo Love or No Love, 150 Crew

From The Beat: And we say to you that it's not too late for you either. In fact, we think that these three paragraphs you've written should be part of the biography you write for us. Tell us about one of these late nights, about what you saw, about what you went through, about how your sister and cousin related. Your life is still yours to throw away or keep... and we want to see you keep it.

Hatred

Can you hate someone you don't know? Of course you can! You have to know one thing about them though at the least. If you see someone, and you be like, "Oh, freak that ninja! I don't like him!" — there has to be something you don't like about him.

For example, white supremist people, they don't like anybody that ain't white. Even if they don't know the person, they hate him 'cause of the color of his skin. Also gang members, they don't like other gang members of rival gangs — they hate them!

Those are just some ways you can hate someone without knowing him. But now, you could also hate yourself without really knowing yourself. You might hate your image! But beauty is only skin deep.

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You give us a couple of clear examples of hating strangers, then take us somewhere few others think to go. 'Cause way too many of us hate ourselves and hardly seem to even know — either know ourselves or know that we are full of self-hate. Maybe projecting that onto others is the source hating another race. It's far more comfortable to hate another than to face — hating yourself. On the other hand, it may be what you've done (to others and yourself) that you hate. You can't change what you did, but you can change — if you face and accept the fact, you can begin to change the way you act. Then self-hate becomes a gate to a better tomorrow, and just as a snake sheds its skin to reveal the healthy new one hidden within, you shed your sorrow and self-hate by changing your ways.

With that being said, we build a jail outside of jail for ourselves, sayin' we can't go here or there.

Building Our Own Jails

What's good with The Beat?

I had some time to really think about what does it really mean to be free. I basically been locked up for about seven months, and I be like, damn! I wish I was free outside these juvenile hall walls.

To be free, first you have to be mentally free. You have to know that you can make it in this world no matter what. You have to have the faith. Secondly, we're talking about being free outside of jail or being incarcerated anywhere. It's kind of funny 'cause when you on the outs and you doing you on, and you selling, banging, robbing people and everything else, see you're really not free 'cause now the judicial system has this hold on you. You're falling for its trap to get you physically locked up.

When you dealing or whatnot, it has you mentally 'cause you saying, "It's the only way." But truth be told, that's not the way. When you with yo' homies or whatever, and y'all out loafin' or doin' whatever, you know you can't go certain places 'cause that's were "dem ninjas be at." With that being said, we build a jail outside of jail for ourselves, sayin' we can't go here or there. So do what you want to. Basically you have to start while you're locked up. Come up with a plan for yourself, and every day do something that involves your plan.

I go to court on the 10th. Hopefully I get out and stay out and really be free from the system and all of the juveniles and jails.

-Reese-C-Cup B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Knowledge is power, and you are gaining a good deal of knowledge — about the system, about the so-called game, and about yourself. This is all preparation for the changes you know you have to make in order to avoid the traps that are laid out for you, either by the system or by the "rules of the game" that you had nothing to do with writing. Of course, knowledge is not enough, because change is not easy. It also requires self-discipline, determination, and plain old hard work. We know you have it in you to get where you want to go, but only you can make the choices that will get you there.

Worldly Eyes

a man that sees only the present has no future
because he dwells on instant pleasure
looking afar might be hard
because in many paths there lies a baracade
it's on you to break past what shackles
your mind and brutally battles it
possibly traumatizing you forever
as creatures of such a broad world
we fail to see the invisible eyes that never
cease to lurk and record our every action
we continued to lead lives
that have a "right now" meaning or purpose
why should i kill something that can't even breathe on
it's own
we act strong
but inside something's wrong
if we look through worldly eyes
it's no telling where we go when we die
if we don't control every moment and positively utilize
the time
but life is life
so i'm'a try to live mine right
eyes tear and water but it doesn't necessarily mean
that we hurt or we're joyful
maybe it's because the body's just tired
of seeing the same ol' things so use some spiritual visine
to clear the visions of your worldly eyes

-Sebastian, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Where can we buy this "spiritual Visine"? Just kidding, 'cause we know it's not for sale, but sometimes comes t those who've been through hell and learned a hard lesson before their eyes clear up enough to even see their blessing — and sometimes the blessing is all in the giving, from taking all you can get by any means to living a new life of generosity. For example, these words you write our readers right here, are a gift to anyone ready to see clearer through a worldly veil of tears that gifts we receive are the sum total of the love we give over the years — and along with the spiritual serenity that is true mental health sometimes comes the bonus of material wealth. Or is that just another test to trick the ego by what it loves best? Money, power and fame, remain ill-got gain when the game claims your soul, and whether others see you fall or not, you fold in the face of your own inner rot without the spiritual visine that lets you see through a world of greed. The praxis of compassion fashions redemption's safe passage through a world gone straight savage, ravaged by man's inhumanity to man until we each take a stand with clear eyes, open hearts, minds and hands.

PIECES OF THE WEEK

Seems To Me...

Seems to me
That I was depending on someone else to lay out my yellow brick road
And it also seems like time does not have your back
When you're assed-out and cold
And that further lets me know that I have to set up a plan
Create a blue print
Travel through my mind and dissect the thing within it
And it seems to me that I would run headfirst
Into a tangled web
Weaved with lies and fake ambitions
But very optimistic
Articulate
Dreams that are begging to fly
Seems to me, like I never appreciate myself
Had enough brains to know
And a lack of courage to show
So destructive in the way it was dealt
Seems to me that an education was more then just being enrolled
Just a brain used
Habits of cutting school
Only to subject to friends who control
Purple and Jose was all I needed
To pretend I'm feeling fine
But like Jack and Jill
I fell down the hill
And couldn't get up in time
Seems to me
There's no such thing as a time machine
To rewind and erase all the imperfect and harsh realities of life
Seems like I'm well aware of all my major setbacks
Laugh now cry later is well experienced fact
Seems like I'm ready to take a step up
To the mindset I've screwed up
And make it
A better life to live
Seems like I've found a way out
Or so it seems to me that I have another chance to live without

-Brittney, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Brittney, it seems to us that you are trying to understand yourself better. It's not necessary that you regret the past. The beautiful thing about our experiences, both good and bad are, that we own them. Our experiences mold us. We are what we've experienced. You've fallen and you've recognized your weaknesses. You are a survivor and now is the time to step up. Create some new experiences. Ones you can be proud of. We are proud of you Brittney – great poem!

A New Knowledge

where have i been
where am i going
i've been a lot of places
see a lot of things showing
but i've been to hell and back
and headed to college
parents doin' crack
while i'm at school for knowledge
never wanted this life
but i guess this is what god has planned
stayed out all night
know what i'm saying
now two thousand six i'm locked up
every night i'm praying
everything should be different
from the block i hugged
to the rock i was spitting
my life needs a quick hundred and eighty
only seventeen wit' a baby
by a girl that's not my lady
i did things that kills them
heartache, headaches, and the way they feel
so i need a big change
and new knowledge in my brain

-Ally Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Remorse is the start or a new knowledge in your heart, after which the brain, however smart, can only follow — until then all your intelligence is hollow. It's not your fault your parents got addicted to crack, but it sure can screw up your heart and mind for a fact! Now you're in deep, a daddy at seventeen, with a lady who's not your chosen queen. We hope you're not passing on the damnation of bad parenting from generation to generation. How are you going to do your child better than your daddy did you, in your present situation? That's the deepest challenge you're facing.

The End

The end, the end is coming
The four horsemen of the Apocalypse
Coming from Texas
We live in a time of high emotions,
High-powered shot guns
High-paid lies and contracts
We are on the verge of mass hysteria
On the verge of another oil war
We live on a melting island
When it thaws life is over
When the bombs hit life is over
When we put our lives in their hands
Life is most definitely over
But, but there is a glimmer of hope, as we're marching towards the front line
We have some hard choices to make
Do we live and die by the old rules
Or do we risk it, and live by the new
Do we live on oil
Do we live on over-fishing or over-farming
Do we pollute
Do we use this planet and throw it away
Or do we live with our neighbors
Do we live with this planet
Do we live

-Zoltan B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: There is a lot in this poem to think about, Zoltan, and you haven't even listed all the possible ways we seem so ready to kill ourselves off (from the bomb to the ozone hole). But you are much more than Chicken Little screaming, "The sky is falling, the sky is falling." You are also like a prophet, reminding us all that there are still choices to be made, and still time to make them. We need thinkers like you more than ever before, precisely because we have so much potential to end it all. But, of course, to live up to that potential which we (and you) know you are capable of, you too must make some different choices. So tell us, whatever the fate of the world might be, what is your own fate to be?

PIECES OF THE WEEK

Use Whatever Time I Get To My Advantage

Okay, it's 7/26/06. I been here since 2/11/06. I've been at B5 for about five months, but on 7/11/06 I got transferred to B4, and so here I am. I'm always thinking about being outside, but it doesn't really matter. I don't give a damn. I could get ten years or more, but I doubt I'll get that many years. But even if I do, I don't care 'cause I'll be out by the time I'm 25. I mean, it hurts and all not being able to see people I kinda care about, and missing all the precious gifts that life has to offer, and so on, but...

I appreciated all that even when I was out there. I always had the attitude of "I should enjoy everything that not take anything for granted because other people don't get to enjoy stuff like this." I always appreciated my life even though it's kinda messed up. Good thing about it was that I learned from all my mistakes, or at least I'm in the process of learning from them. And hella mistakes I have made.

Anyways, no ignorant person can truly understand (no shhh, Sherlock!) that the crimes I did to get me in here were done with good intentions. I'll explain my story thoroughly in another Beat issue, maybe a BWO if they hurry up with my sentence soon enough. Well basically, I was tagging up busses, some heroes tried to step up and call the 5-0, or take pictures of me and the crew that is always into something, and I would hit them and/or take there cameras. They made such a big deal about the fact that I hit a bus driver rather than the other three "regular" people that were assaulted and robbed as well.

Not that it isn't serious or anything, but it's kinda funny that hitting a bus driver gives you five years when hitting anybody else would be less than ten months or something. Less than two months, maybe, if you're tried as a juvenile. They got four misdemeanors and eleven felonies on my ass.

I care. The specific people I hit were actually innocent, even though other people I assaulted actually deserved it. (These people I did assault that deserved what they got because of moral reasons, either never snitched or just never succeeded in finding me. I was never captured for these and various other incidents), so for those specific people, I do feel I was kind of wrong and I apologize to y'all. But at the time, anybody who dared snitch was an enemy.

To hell with gangs. Snitches were my rivals, and anybody trying to jack me or test me or some shhh, and plenty of people fell into these gangs...

I just figured out something! Just now! The reason this whole case is so serious is because I was lightly and slowly bringing the "gang mentality" violence into regular white people's lives! I mean, not intentionally, but maybe they assume that by hitting snitches, gradually more people would follow my footsteps and soon a whole graffiti culture would be aimed at "successful" people and their mindless jobs! I mean this shows that they don't care if we kill each other off, but they seriously don't want our anger to have anything to do with "society."

And what do you think they would do to me if I hit four people at school? Or if I hit them and caused "great bodily injury." Maybe some time, but nowhere near ten years! Not even over two years, probably. But no, they gotta give me hella extra charges that say....

"Minor (my name) did commit a felony, namely, a violation of section 136.1 (c) (1) of the California Penal code, in that the said minor did willfully, knowingly maliciously, and unlawfully prevent and dissuade (victim's name) and attempt to prevent and dissuade (victim's name) a victim and witness of a crime by means of force and threats of unlawful injury to the person and damage to the property of himself and another from:

Attending and giving testimony at a trial, proceeding, and inquiry authorized by law; and/or

Making a report of such victimization to a peace officer, state and local law enforcement officer, probation and parole and correctional officer, prosecuting agency and judge; and/or

Causing a complaint, indictment, information, probation and parole violation to be sought and prosecuted and from assisting in the prosecution thereof; and/or

Arresting and causing and seeking the arrest of a person in connection with such victimization,"

Which basically explains how I said, "Hang the phone up or I'ma sock you!" Or sometimes, "If you point that camera at me I'ma beat the F outta you!" Man, they tryin' to play me so hard it's funny. But I don't care what they do to me. Actually I kind of do, but either way, is gonna be a good thing because if they do send me to the Y for a few years, I'll just use that time to think and read hella books and work on my master plan for the revolution. They send me to Glen Mills or any programs, just take advantage of it. Take advantage of everything and twist some discipline to my advantage, and by sending me to YA all they gonna do is fuel my fire that I need to burn off on these damn people.

Even being in YGC, I transformed my little cell with locked doors into a thinking cell where I express myself with words.... I learn in here by reading books and thinking to myself. To keep it real, it's in the City's best interest to send me off to some program just because if they send me to the Y, I'll be angry... But I'm not trying to put a message that anybody's in any kind of danger or anything...

Oh did I mention the "10 year warning" to anybody yet? I don't know if I'm wrong, but it seems pretty obvious. It seems that America, or at least California, (it doesn't matter because it's all ran by the same people) is trying to get rid of us within 10 years. Not completely, but drastically. (Nothing is 100% so you better believe they doing it as best as they can.). Why else would they all of sudden make new 25-life type laws? Why they got laws that can try kids over the age of 13 as adults? Why have over 200 people — well over 200 people under the age of 18 suffered the death penalty? In the glorious land of America. The land of freedom, the land of opportunity, liberty and hope, people as young as fifteen years old have been sentenced to death!

Doesn't anybody ever ask a simple question as why? Why are they building two new prisons within about ten more years? Why are they making so many more laws with stricter consequences? If the judge or judges, charge you with a manslaughter and give you hella years, it's a form of punishment right? And for killing a man anybody deserves a punishment, right? Then why can he walk right out the situation if a certain amount of money is paid? By "American Morality" or something, isn't that man supposed to serve a punishment? What kind of punishment is that? Maybe it's the fact that they trust for that person to come back in and all they really care about is money. They know that the "regular citizens" are safe from being murdered.

Well, why don't they try to help us out? Why don't they got programs to help black/brown "communities" better known as ghettos and 'hoods where they stuff us all?

Where the hell did AIDS come from? In the 1960s and '70s, the virus didn't exist, and now about 25 years later during 2004, it was the leading cause of death worldwide among people 15-59. In 2006, black people are eight times more likely to die from AIDS than white people after they have been diagnosed with HIV. Ain't no kind of cure for the future. In 1994 this one lady was diagnosed with HIV after she donated blood. What the hell is that showing you? Think about that shhh. There are about 1 million Americans with HIV, and at least one-half of them is black women, men and children, and blacks only make up 12 or 13% of the U.S. population. Even more people in Africa livin' with AIDS and HIV, and what... they wanna blame AIDS on homosexuals? Hell nah, something ain't right here.

I don't mean to focus on blacks more than my own

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PIECES OF THE WEEK

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cultural background (I'm Salvadorean), but at this point in time I see blacks hangin' on the edge a little more than my own people. Well, everybody's my people, but I hope y'all know what I mean and don't take it the wrong way. But at the same time my people, my cultural people (all Latinos), we gettin' played too! People should notice the recent laws about illegal immigrants and the fact that the Government has the nerve to call us "Aliens." A felony is what you get if you get caught helping out an immigrant. By helping out I mean if you let an immigrant stay at your house, give him a job or some shhh. Even a church can get a felony for giving food money and teaching the word of God to them. Tell me that ain't messed up. The President is spending about 700 or 800 million dollars on that border that separates the United States with Mexico. Just a few days ago — now it's Tuesday 8/8/06 — this one dude got deported from here to Honduras, and all he did was sell a rock to a narc, Well, I got so much more shhh to say but I gotta go. Think about shhh seriously, peace to all.

-Meen B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Although we admire your passion, Meen, sometimes it gets in the way of your reason. For example, your theory that the government is trying to get rid of y'all within ten years is based on a false belief... "Why else would they all of a sudden make new 25-life type laws," you ask. But in truth, those Draconian punishments are not "all of a sudden." They were first enacted in 1973 (33 years ago) in New York as a way to reduce drug addiction. (It didn't work then and it won't work now, but the laws are not new. We don't believe it means "they" are thinking of getting rid of you in ten years or any particular time. We don't believe they think at all — beyond what will help them get elected.) Which is why we truly applaud you for committing yourself to educating yourself by reading and writing. No one wants to be locked up, but for motivated and intelligent people like you, that time away from the world can be extremely important in giving you a chance to learn many things that you are only assuming now. Everything you learn will expand your mind more and more, and force you to ask more and more questions. What you learn could make you into a true revolutionary (the kind who knows the history of revolutions, what it means to organize and how to do it, how to speak and write effectively by learning and then using accurate statistics and stories, and not having to rely on guesses...) Here's another example: You assert that "well over 200 people under the age of 18" have been subjected to the death penalty. This is a subject we know something about, and the correct number in the modern era (which began when the death penalty was re-enacted in 1976 after a 25-year absence) is 22. For us, 22 is 22 too many, but it isn't "well over 200." (And while it's true that children as young as 14 have been put to death in this country, that has not been true for at least 60 years when George Stinney was executed in 1944. It's only fair to point out that on March 5, 2005, the U.S. Supreme Court — as conservative as it is — abolished the death penalty across the entire country for anyone who was under 18 at the time of the crime.) Similarly, no one walks away from a manslaughter conviction "if a certain amount of money is paid," unless you're talking about bail, which is paid before a trial, and while the accused is still "presumed innocent" by law. Once convicted, there will almost certainly be a prison sentence for manslaughter, though it's conceivable that a judge could impose only a fine. (If you have a particular case in mind, we'd like to hear about it.) Even your example about helping illegal "aliens" is not quite right... That law to make helping immigrants a felony is only a proposal in Congress. It is not the law. It has not been passed, and it looks very unlikely to pass, at least this year... At the same time, you ARE asking good questions, and we hope you keep asking them. We, too, want to know why they keep building prisons when it obviously is no solution to crime. We, too, want to know why they don't help people at the bottom of the social/economic structure to move up and out. We want to know other things, as well, like why does the richest country in the world have a higher rate of infant mortality than Cuba? Than Turkey? Than Costa Rica? We, too, want to know why more isn't being done to combat AIDS in the black community (but we also want to know why the black community itself for too long treated the subject of AIDS as a "white, gay" problem, not worth talking about, even as their mortality numbers piled higher and higher. Why has it taken black ministers and leaders so long to address this issue more forcefully until recently?) In short, we think it's too easy to point the finger at government and make "them" responsible for all our problems (even though they shoulder a huge responsibility). Sometimes, victims (of AIDS or anything else) must bear responsibility for their own ignorance, for their own indifference to what is all around them, for their own actions and inactions. Not everything is the result of a conspiracy. In the end, as we've said before, Meen, you have the capacity to be a leader where leaders are in desperate need. You have crossed a huge barrier when you recognize, as you have, that "everybody is my people" — which is why we have such high expectations for you. But being a leader is not just something you decree for yourself. You need to learn some things that have gone before you. You need to read on the topics that interest you and substitute facts for assumptions. You need to learn a little humility, too, that says, "Maybe I'm wrong about this, or about that..." because without that, you will only be leading yourself. And while that's important, and we applaud you for it, we all need so much more!

. . . why don't they try to help us out? Why don't they got programs to help black/brown "communities" better known as ghettos and 'hoods where they stuff us all?

Old Fast

layin' in my bed with my eyes wide open
gettin' out there fast is what i'm hopin'
tired of these voices to go with these faces
i need to get out, i need to go places
i feel isolated, like i'm in a town of racists
gotta stay calm, i don't need no more cases
i got enough weight as it is on my shoulders
don't need no bad write-up's in my folder
my whole demeanor is getting colder
i'm hard-headed, harder than a boulder
so now i don't even want to listen
'cause all it does it get my wishin'
to get back to all those i'm missin'
but i wouldn't be here if i'd just listened
so that's kind of like a major contradiction
for the time i'm'a get, there ain't no predictin'
i wish this wasn't fact, i wish this was fiction
i'd go back before i got the knife out the kitchen
but i can't so it's no help
all my dreams gone, in the heat they melt
and i was damn near boiling, that's how i felt
i got scars inside me like gettin' hit by a belt
and everything in here is gettin' old
i hate doin' what i'm told
feelin' like a bread loaf growin' mold
i got no life no more, it's been sold
to the court who keep puttin' me on hold
and these ninjas keep thinkin' they bold
they playin' with me but i'm dead serious
my tempeture's risin', i'm gettin' furious
just don't try me, don't get too curious
'cause i'll have you feelin' delirous
i'm the real deal, not fake like a weave
so back to the point, i need to leave
now, while i'm young like steve

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Remember we told you we got a response to one of your poems, wheres someone out there in cyberspace, reading The Beat online, wrote about one of your two-line couplets, that most poets go a lifetime without writing anything so powerful or so true? Well, this poem is full of exactly that sort of passionate expression, a true confession of your tormented heart and mind while you're locked up in here facing who knows how much time. Still, we pray you stay strong — really that's a misnomer, 'cause it's more like knowing when to bend so you don't break, which means accepting your weakness, too, as an aspect of yourself you must integrate into a larger wisdom, the self-knowledge that brings self-control as you sweat out your time in the system. The one area in which you can still flex your full power, is in your own mind, and your failure to do that when you melted down on the outs is, as you say, what brought this about. Listening to others is not really the point — though that's what they'll want to teach you in the joint is the problem with you (they really only teach you how to get over as best you can no matter what situation you find yourself in). No, the point is learning to marry truth to wisdom in your own heart and mind, then going deep inside yourself to listen to what's smart, right and wise next time your passions melt your normal self to where your burning in the fires of hell. We call it educating your heart, and that's what it will take to survive your time in the penal system and make that new start. Don't give up on yourself doing well.

PIECES OF THE WEEK

This System

What up Beat? Como está? Espero que estan bien. This is that vato Goofy coming at y'all once again. Bueno, ahora quiero escribir de este sistema culero. (Well, today I want to write about the system).

Man, I've been here for four and a half months and it's only getting worse. I haven't had any good news in a long time. I've been sitting here all this time, and I've seen cats come and go. To them it's a game 'cause they know that they are getting out soon. But not me. I would like to know when my release date is, but I don't.

It's so easy to get locked up, especially when you're on parole or probation. This isn't my first time locked up. I've been to three different counties. At first when I got locked up, I wasn't trippin'. I got out, did some dirt, got locked up again, got out... did that a couple times. Then it started to hit me, like "What the hell am I doing?" I'm basically digging my grave in this system. If I'ma keep doing stupid shhh, I might as well call Soledad State Prison and tell them to save me a cell, you feel me?

Doing time gets old. Cats in here have a smile on their face all day 'cause they doing time with their homies or 'cause the staff buys them sodas and candy. Ain't that a trip. Then when they get released, they do the same things they were doing before, and they ain't trippin' 'cause they had fun in the hall.

But I promise you that some day, all of you people doin' time will get what I'm sayin' and be tired of having staff and COs telling you when to get up, eat, shhh, have large muscle activities, and when to sleep. You can learn quick or be hard headed, and have a criminal record with a couple strikes, and look back when you are about 35 and be like, "Damn! What did I do?" By the way things are looking for me, I had to learn the hard way 'cause I ain't going to no place nice. Como sea (whatever will be) I'ma stand tall, stay strong, and try my best not to fall. Trucha.

-Goofy B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We appreciate every word of this powerful piece, Goofy, but we have talked to you and read your pieces over this long incarceration, and we wonder if you're still struggling with whether to "leave the life" or if you're truly committed to what you've written here. We know that it is not an easy thing to give up a way of life, or principles that have guided you up to now, so we wonder if it's just the consequences that have forced you to think in a new way, or if there's more to it. You are certainly right that each time you catch a case, you dig the hole deeper until you can end up in a place like Soledad. So we can understand why negative consequences can lead to changed behavior. But are there also positive motivations, having to do with the kind of life you do want to live, the family you do want to have, the place in society you do want to fill that also are moving in your brain? We are always interested in the process of change, because we know that change is the one certainty in life. Can you give us a look into that process, which is still ongoing within you?

This Soaring Death Rate

Why people get killed in Oakland?
Me, I don't know why,
but that's a shame
why would you kill your own race?
that's just stupid.
Why would you take somebody's life away?
do you know somebody's mother got to live with that
for the rest of her life?
Would more cops help?
No, because cops kill kids too,
if a cop tries to arrest a kid, and if a kid tries to run the cop
will shoot at him.
Then if he shoots the kid, the cops will say he did it
because he was resisting arrest.
God bless everybody.

-Lil' Sam, 150 Crew

From The Beat: One of the things we love about your spirit, is that even when you are writing about something depressing and sad, like your city's murder rate, you still find a way to look deep within the problem and end on a note of hope, and generosity towards your fellow humans. This is a good thing, and your hope gives us a reason for hope as well.

Been There Done That

been around the world, seen a lot of faces
different countries with different races
now i'm tied up like some laces
in the past i seen many things
seen people turn into angels with wings
ballers rockin' pinky rings
a lot of females, a lot of flings
with every moment i seem to change
i go up and down with no range
what will my future hold
what would've happened if i'd listened to what i was told
why did i play my cards when i knew it was time to fold
will i be hot — or on the streets cold
when i come to a fork, which is the right path
this is something more complicated than math
i need to let out my wrath
but i need to wake faster than a plunge in a cold bath
i can no longer go down the wrong road
but i just got so much on my load
i feel like my life is written in morse code
too difficult to understand, need it in easier mode
when i get to my future, you'll see what i choose

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It is hard to separate it out, a bookkeeping more difficult than the budget of the federal government. The difference is that you're the only expert who can put in the work to make sense of it all — turn the pain to gain by learning the lesson from each and every fall. Most get stuck on how they might've slicked it, when the real mistake was at the root of their thinking. It's not that everything you did was wrong, but what may have worked for a minute when you had to stand strong, taught you to go on that way, until you faced the price you pay today. You're almost a grown man with options that the boy you were could never understand — or even if he understood, it didn't do him any good 'cause he was too young, just a kid — but you need no longer go on doing what you did. It's time for a clean break with a past in which you fought to survive, 'cause now you want more from life than just getting by. You want to succeed, you want to stay free, you want to thrive — and that's why you'll choose right and strive to do good for the rest of your life.

One Life To Live

I have one life to live so I'm gon' live it up to the fullest. Pop pills sometimes, weed and drink henn, until it's my time. Because where I'm from, living to be 18 is a goal that not a lot of young people have been able to achieve.

For the last couple of years, young people have been dying. That's why we live our days like there's no tomorrow. As long as young people keep dying mother's going to keep crying. It's not a good thing but it's true, and statistics say we gon' die, by an overdose or a drive by.

Sometimes I just close my eyes and hope that everything changes, because this life ain't right. I often cry some nights 'cause my folks keep dying. It's hard to change, but the game remains the same. I'm getting tired of these young brothers coming to jail --187 so they don't got no bail.

So it's like what the hell we only got one life to live--might as go out in style.

-Joe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can't really contradict the facts of your case as you lay it out here - brilliantly, too. And sure, if everything you see on TV and a lot of what you see at school and even at home makes you feel like you don't matter, like you're just a statistic, then I guess you'll start to give up on the future and live for the present. But you know what, we say this: You only have one life to live, so make it count, goddamn it. Be someone who makes the world better and brighter than it was before. You say the young people have no hope? Well you are a young person, you can be one to bring that hope. You understand the pain that people feel, because you've felt it yourself. People might look at you and say there's another young criminal, he's part of the problem. But actually, you're the solution...you're the one who understands the problem best. Even writing what you wrote here - that can be part of the healing. Don't ever let the world make you feel unneeded. We need you now more than ever.

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

Eyewitness New Orleans, Part 2

Back to watcha boy was sayin', sorry it took so long to write back, they switched me to Max. But man, like when I went to sleep that night and worked, the water just started to take over the streets. It started at my ankles at first, so we was like, OK it'll go down.

But it didn't. Hours started to pass by and the water started risin' later on that day. When night came the water was like knee high and people were walkin' in it. Me, my moms, my pregnant sister, and her daughter had to sleep through all that. But I didn't care as long as nothin' happened to my fam' ya heard me.

The next day I woke up and the water got a little bit higher, and Moms was gone. So I'm like "Meme (sister), where Moma at?"

And then Moms busted in the door with beaucoup stuff from Winn Dixie, and said boy come on, and I'm like, what ?

She said everybody in the projects was getting food, and I said "commo': and when we got there, man, everybody had bags of stuff.

Me and moms went in and did the same thing. After that we went back to the house and dumped everything on the floor. Next thing you know, the stove wasn't workin' and the water was off.

-Young Chase The New Awlins Boy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's so great that you wrote this down. Hurricane Katrina was one of the biggest disasters of the century, and when you tell of your experience there, you are telling a part of history that we all need to know. Now we want to know even more for your next installment -- Did everyone in your family stay safe? How did you end up here? What did you pick up from Winn Dixie? Did you have to be helicoptered out? How did you eat/shower/take care of yourselves after your water got turned off! We can't wait for part three.

Life in Oakland

Life in Oakland is hard for people these days, because the kids are getting killed or dropping out of high school and going to jail.

Now some people think that we need some more cops to protect the community, so they will feel safe at home and on the street. But the cops can't make a difference in the community, because when somebody get killed it's too late --the person is already gone. Then when the police finally show up to the scene, all they said is "did anybody see what happened here?"

So cops is really no help in the community, because all we have to do is come together and stop fighting and killing each other over the BS that 's the reason why we are killing our selves. Some dude yells that he's from North Oakland at a party in East Oakland and the same dude you runs somebody and step on their shoes and they get mad and said watch where you are going dude, then you and that dude get into it, then when the party is over all you hear is gunshots and the person you got shot at is the dude. You stepped on the dude's shoes now he's dead. For what? For stepping on someone's shoes!

In 2003 we had over a hundred homicides in Oakland and one of the homicides was my mother. She was the 73rd homicide in Oakland. Peace out, Beat. This was yo' boy Lil' Sam, and like I always say, God bless everybody.

-Lil' Sam, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Especially after a piece like this, and after everything you've been through, it's good to see you signing off on a blessing and a note of hope. This is the kind of piece we could send directly to the police, the mayor, even the president, so they would hear about how many strong hearts break and mend in the struggle for the streets, and how much we need to feel like the cops are protectors - not enemies. Thank you, again, for your insights.

Dear Afterlife

Man, this max life ain't coo' right now. I know I'm in jail but they don't gots to be hateful.

And then when I kick my door they get mad and want to send me to Boys Control, like that's supposed to hurt me.

Some call me a sad case, but how can they say that? They say I'm considered the worst that Alameda Country has, but I ain't had no fights, never told anybody I'm gon' beat them. Also, I'm kinda humble all I do is read. And they label me as a savage beast!

I actually want to go to school and become something of myself. Don't get me wrong, I know I did some things in my life, and I'm willing to make a change, but as long as I stay in here it's gon' hold me back a while. It's hard to maintain focus when staff is on your neck, writing me up without even telling me. So now I'm gon' kick back and wait on the release that I'm hoping for.

Sometimes I wonder about how it's going to be. Because this stuff that I am going through ain't coo' . Right now I could be doing something else besides home or getting some money. Every day that I get in my room all by myself, this Max unit gets me hella mad sometimes I feel like going bad. But that only gets me hour after hour. But I don't care, it's just another day in the county.

Better days will come, but for some reason, things have been going kinda slow and sixteen years is a long time to be facing.

But I want to hear what they gon' say, because I'm getting tired of sittin' in this room just waiting with my life on the line so I often wonder about you hoping that things will be better it's hard to sleep some night.

I like sleeping because it's the only way out of my cell. So I hope things get better after life. See you soon.

-Fat Boy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Well, we've also seen a lot of what Alameda County has to offer, and we think you're some of its best! When you write about your life, you write like someone older and wiser than just a teenager, with honesty and clarity. These upcoming years will be a trial, but do not give up on yourself, do not give up on your soul, do not give up on all the times you reached into the strongest part of yourself to smile, to maintain, to keep from going wild when you wanted to. You will still be a young man when you get out, and if you play your cards right (meaning study and read like crazy!) you can also come out as a young strong man. You could read, write, study, learn a foreign language (Arabic, Spanish, or Chinese are all languages that help a person get good jobs), write poems. . . that's the best way to keep your mind alive. Because your body may belong to the system, but your mind belongs to you.

No Parents, My Biggest Disappointment

My biggest disappointment in life is not really having a mother and father figure in my life. That's one of my biggest disappointments because if it was for my parents I wouldn't be in the situations I'm in right now. But I'm not really trippin' because everything I know and learning I'm proud of it.

I'm going to a group home next week and the group home I'm going to has a lot of options to offer me. When I get there, I'm going to work on my High School Diploma or my GED, and while I'm there, I'm gonna be starting on two trades. I'm also going to try out on a basketball and baseball team. Instead of getting further from the group, I'm going to stick it out and see what the program has to offer me. Damn that's the best thing moving for me yet. That's my biggest accomplishment.

-Art Cash B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We're proud of you for the goals you've set for yourself. If you keep to your promise to make the most out of your program — to learn all you can and turn it to your advantage — there's absolutely no reason why you shouldn't be able to accomplish all of it. What are the two trades you want to pursue? We're sorry that you had to overcome the burden of growing up without the support of real parenting, but that only shows what a strong person you are to be able to move past it. It sounds like you're on a journey, so just keep walking forward.

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

Gettin' In The Game, My Biggest Disappointment In Life

Mines is getting' in da game. Why? Because let me tell you. Getting' in da game is easy, but getting' out is hard. In da game kids at da age of 12-18, die by every crime in da book. Shot robbed, killed, stabbed, raped harassing, an' any other unlawful things. Boys and girls in da game can't even reach da age of 21.

Why is it easy to get in? 'Cause it looks easy, da things they do and what they get out of it. But there are consequences and repercussions. So you want to experience it. Then once you do it, you want to get out. But there's another way to experience it, just by watchin'.

Why is it hard getting' out? 1) Don't want to disrespect yo' homies; 2) you want to keep your respect; 3) last but not least ninjas look at you and think. You just gotta expect something later after. So I got a saying, "It's easy to make up than break up." Peace.

-Uce B B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We like the reasons you give for why it seems easy to get in the game, and why it's not really easy at all. But we don't quite understand your saying that it's easy to make up than break up. Do you mean that once you're in the game, you can't get out? If that's what you mean, we know you're wrong, because we know too many people (some much older and in much deeper than you), who have finally decided that thinking for themselves and making decisions that benefit their own futures is preferable to doing someone else's bidding. And they have made the break! So we know it can be done.

YGC Again . . . My Biggest Disappointment

My biggest disappointment is coming here again. I always end up messing up over and over, and end up making the worst decision for my life. That's my biggest disappointment.

Now what I'm gon' do to change is switch my life around. I may do good instead of wrong, because that's how you succeed in dis life. To move forward, don't keep trippin' on my mistakes, because dey is all lessons that I can learn from, which I have learned from. And now I will switch my life around.

Instead of runnin', I'm gon' do all of my shhh, includin' my program and probation. If I got to not blow, not do crime, and not to do wrong, do right! It's betta den wastin' my time in a box. So dat's what I'ma do! Do me, but in a different legit way, ya feel me?

-White Boy B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You've figured out a lot, and if you stick to what you can clearly see that moves you forward, you will be amazed at how many things will change for the better in your life. Here's our worry, though. It's so much easier when you're locked up and missing your family and friends to make the right decisions in your mind than it is to make those same right decisions when you are out and free to choose. The temptation will be for you to say, "Oh, I can just blow this once," or "I'll just go with my homies to do this lil' lick," and then you find yourself right back where you started. So it takes more than just knowing what you have to do; it also takes real discipline and an ability to keep your eyes on the prize, which is your own future. We know you can do this, but only time will tell whether you will or not. Stay in school, and don't let yourself down.

Instead of runnin', I'm gon' do all of my shhh, includin' my program and probation.

My Life In The Streets Of The Jungle

It all started when I was nine years old and I hit my first blunt
I started huggin' the block every chance that I can get
And that's when my life in the system started to pace
I was booked into the hall and had to serve thirty days
Got released on probation, an' never had better ways
Turned ten
And that's when I took my first sip of that heem
Went to talk to my big cousin
And he gave me a bundle of that cream
So at this point I wasn't huggin' the block for nothin'
A few hundred dollars a day in my pocket was somethin'
Went to the mall every week to buy hella fits and kicks
All the beezies was on me an' I was lovin' that shhh
Then that's when I bought my first grill
Shiny wit' six tops, a few open faces, an' a few solids
Then, when I was twelve, that's when I turned into a young hawg
I was the youngest of all t
They said I was big for my age
By this time I was six feet tall
A young ninja in a grown man's body
And I was the one who they called "Take Off"
Then my life in the system just kept goin' on an' on
Now I'm sixteen, facin' fifteen years
And I don't know where I'm goin'
But still can beat it and get out

-Henny, Marin

From The Beat: Now that you're facing years, how do you feel about your education from the streets? What has this life given you? All the results we see are imprisonment, desperation and loneliness. Can you see the same thing as well? Will you be living this life for the rest of your days? If you do, you might not get anywhere in life. What else are you waiting to happen to your life to get the point that this thug life will always hold you back from succeeding and keeping your freedom? You have many choices, why are you stuck on these ones? Think wisely!

Mama Cry Today

Hands up if you feel me
Mama cry today
Cry tonight
An' tomorrow again
Baby boy got sent to heaven
Just lose his life
Over strife
And that ain't right
Young people gotta wake up
Wake up with the positive
And put down the negative
Get caught up in this and that
An' materialize the wrong choice
As you pay the price
Teenagers living their life in great danger
Selling crack
Got jacked
Going insane
Lost track
Young Black soulja in combat
Why turn back
To a trap
Set for a rat?
Lost touch and a way to react
To the fact
That
Why bloodline is under attack
Under attack
To the facts
And sucks behind the cracks

-Dean, Marin

From The Beat: You co-wrote this rap with someone, but the two parts fit very well. Are readers can truly feel and hear your message loud and clear. You're right—when a mother's child gets in trouble, there can be many victims, including her. What can you do from inside juvy to make her, and those who love you, know how you appreciate her? You should let her know how you feel. We are sure this will lift her spirit.

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

Free

Free, that's what we all want to be! But what exactly does being free mean? When asked the question we will all most likely say something like "to get out of jail, is to be free!"

But why can't we be free while we are all incarcerated? Just because there is a door and some cement and fences keepin' us detained in this institution, doesn't mean we can't be free. We aren't "physically" free, but mentally the possibility is endless. The jails aren't meant to rehabilitate us. The penal system is meant to keep us tangled in their web and break us down. They rarely offer programs to help us out.

So we got to let out minds be free. Learn some shhh while we knock this time off. Kill two birds with one stone. Our imagination can take us anywhere! But when we actually do get released, will we act on our dreams and become something? Time will tell.

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Yes, more will be revealed in time, but it's Big Vic who will be taking it in with his mind, heart and soul, till the mistakes in the past and the pain in the present both get swallowed whole by a larger truth — when the revelation takes hold in Big Vic's mentality and he becomes the living proof of the imagination's very real power to transform reality from the inside out. Without a doubt, we believe you can make your freedom come about, first on the inside, mentally, and then when you're out where you're meant to be. In the name of peace, love and understanding — listen to your higher imagination's commanding.

I'm Goin' To Live

Where I have I been? I've been goin' through wars and battles with family and friends. I've been going through hell trying to get to heaven. I've been in the streets trying to survive. I've been goin' to work tryin' to stay alive. I've been livin' the life that Cito not meant to live. But where am I goin'? I am now in jail, but I am headed to freedom. I'm goin' to a betta life. I'm going to achieve my goals. I'm going to live…

-Cito B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You know, Cito, you're not only "headed to freedom," you've already found it! It's something you carry within you, and it shines through every piece you write. Don't be tempted to fall back into old ways that Cito is not meant to live. Go for the gold. It's within your reach!

Changes

I grew up never getting in trouble and always doing good in school. I hung out with a crowd of people who didn't even know the meaning of trouble. Basketball and football were my life and my loves. Everything in my life was good. I had no problems with anything.

Elementary school was easy to get through, and middle school was almost easy, but that's when the problems started. I met a whole bunch of new people, and started to hang out with them. I started to get into trouble for little things, like talking back to teachers, and trying to act superior to other people.

Once I started high school, that's when I really started to get into trouble. My life started to change. I started to drink and smoke. That was only a year and a half ago. Now I'm locked up and it's because of my changes.

I realize that's not the path I want to go down, because I stopped playing sports. I am trying now to change back to the person that I used to be. I want to be that student athlete that gets good grades and doesn't get into trouble. I want to make my mother know she raised me right. I want to never have to think about getting locked up again. I want to be a pro in society.

-Marcus, Marin

From The Beat: You certainly have the right attitude. Since you're good at sports and very bright, you should be able to do well in school again. It's easy to get into the habit, but hard to get off of it. Be yourself. People will like you, even if it takes them longer to get to know you. You're smart enough to make the right decisions. Stay away from bad influences that can be obstacles in your direction to success. Don't mess it up again. This is your future you're talking about, not theirs.

On My Way To College

Where have I been and where I'm goin? I been in and out of YGC since I was a young teen. I'll be 18 next month. I been in program in state and out of state. While out of state, I earned my high school diploma. I been in the hospital. I just got out last week. I got shot three times two weeks ago. I got shot in my leg, arm, and back. The ones in my arm and leg went through, but the one in my back is still there. It chipped my spinal cord centimeters away from leavin' me paralyzed.

I been in trouble and I been doin' the wrong thing, but where I'm 'bout to go is college. While I was out of state I was accepted to college Morns Brown, Salem International, and Grambling University. I start school at Salem the 18th of this month.

Me comin' home for the summer wasn't supposed to happen. I ran. Me gettin' shot wasn't supposed to happen. I wasn't supposed to be here. Some time this weak I should be goin' to the airport. That's if the doctor clears me 'cause my lung's messed up 'cause the bullet pierced it. I also need a certificate to clear me to get on the plane 'cause I got a bullet in my lung. I'm goin' across the country. I'm gonna graduate in four years.

-Tyree B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It makes us shudder to think of how close you came to never being able to write this wonderful piece — or anything else! We hope you take the fact that you are still alive and walking around as a sign that you were meant to live — and to live in the right way! Congratulations on getting accepted to college. Now comes the really hard work, but you've shown yourself that you are capable of doing whatever you put your mind to. So we hope you invite us to your graduation ceremony in four years! Good luck!

While I was out of state I was accepted to college Morns Brown, Salem International, and Grambling University. I start school at Salem the 18th of this month.

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

Where Have You Been

Where have you been?
You said you were there but you weren't.
When you left you said you were coming back.
Where did you go high on life
Flying to different galaxies?
Where have you been?
Gone for so many years.
You said you wasn't doing it
But you was always on it.
When will you come back
'Cause I'm tired of wondering where you are.
I'm heading down the same path you are going down.
When am I going to stop wondering where you are?
Now you're back telling me where you been.
Now I don't want to hear it.
I ask why and you don't know why.
So I say now it's your turn to feel the pain
When I'm gone and you are wondering where I'm going to be.

-Iggy, 150 Crew

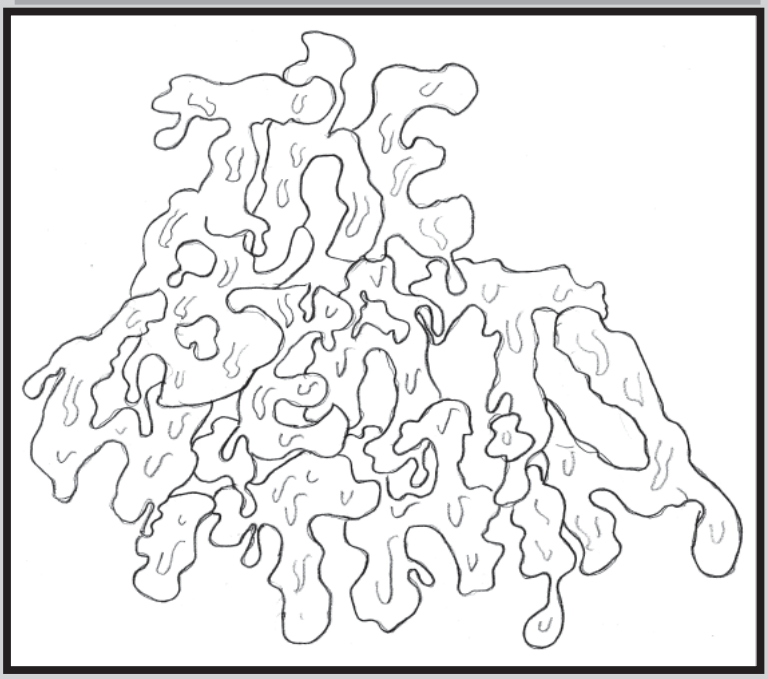
From The Beat: This is a beautiful poem. There is nothing more powerful than a writer who isn't afraid to totally put himself out there. It is not easy to reveal some of the most painful parts of our past so we thank you for having the courage to share. It sounds like who ever this was written about was someone very close to you, someone you loved very much. It has hard to watch the people we love destroy their lives, slowly but surely. It is even harder to see when we have become what we hated, what we feared, what made us cry. It sounds like you are smart young man but be careful. Don't punish people or yourself by screwing up your life cause then everyone loses.

Where I Have Been

I've been through hell and back.
I've been beat by my dad for years;
I had to work and he took my money; and he beat my moms.
He wasn't a father to me and I didn't get love from him.
I've been in 20 group homes and jail.
I've been on the streets and got away.
Bad and good memories stick to me
but mostly bad because of my life.
I try to think positive.
I am going to college and to tour the world.

-Stone Face, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have been through hell and back but do not give up. It isn't fair that some of us suffer more than others; some of us are tested in ways that others can't even imagine. But we like how you ended this piece – you are not going to use your past as an excuse to not succeed. We know it might sound crazy but it could be worse. Make the most of your opportunities and don't look back.



Features

And there... he say just to see,
Feel every emotion
There's that sky that show
Everything he's been through
hust a song makes him cry
If there isn't an understanding
his tears made them as clean
as the ocean water
And
there
he cries just to understand
where he's come from

-Lil' Mainy The Prince, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This might be our favorite of all your poems so far, and considering how much you've written for us, that's saying a lot. The images are simple, but so true, sometimes our tears are our biggest gift, as they fall they become stars that light the way for us.

Being Here Now, My Biggest Disappointment

The biggest disappointment in my life is being here right now because I can't take care of my child. I feel so stupid because my little girl was born June 5. Eight days after that I had to do something stupid to get myself locked up. Now I might be locking at a few years.

I just being sitting in my room thinking there's a good chance that my daughter might be a few years old the next time I see her. She might be talking and walking, but she won't know her father. She might run from me when I see her and ask her to come here, or she might cry when I pick her up. And it's nobody else fault but mine because I did the stupid shhh to get myself locked up.

That's why I'm going to make better decisions so I can be there for her. But I go' end this shhh by sayin' I love my daughter.

-Kb B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You've learned something really important, which is that saying "I love you" is not as important as showing that love. And often, showing that love means giving up what we like because we know it will hurt those we love. When you did whatever it was that brought you here, you were not as mature as you have become, and therefore you weren't thinking of others. Now you are. It's sad that this lesson has to be learned in such a harsh way (harsh both for you and your daughter), but if it's a lesson learned, then it changes everything about your future. You're thinking like an adult. Don't stop.

. . . there's a good chance that my daughter might be a few years old the next time I see her. She might be talking and walking, but she won't know her father. She might run from me when I see her and ask her to come here, or she might cry when I pick her up.

Missin' You

I didn't mean it when I said I didn't love you so you know
But right now without you my blood can't flow
It's hard to maintain when time goes by slow
I'm missin' you -- without you it's hard to breathe
I try to be strong and not to grieve
I love you with all my heart.
I thought you knew that from the start.
Now you want to be apart.
It's all right, do yo' thing. And I'm goin' do my thing.
I can do bad without you I went this far ain't no looking back
What you said made my heart drop six feet.
So what you need to do is bag bag and give me 50 feet.
I'm not being mean, isn't this what you wanted to be apart.
Now you want me back, now that wouldn't be smart.
Just because I miss you so bad and at the same time
I'm glad you did it. Cause I don't have to worry about you anymore. Knowing that's a lie
I can't stop thinking about you you're the love of my life,
And didn't I tell you that you're my future wife?
So babe just calm down and let's think what we gonna do
Because to tell you the truth.. I'm really missin' you,

-Maurice, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This might just be our favorite Maurice poem yet, especially because of the way mix love and anger, heart and heartbreak, all the different contradictions of trying to make it work, especially with all that added stress of separation and incarceration. We hope you manage to keep your family together, and we feel what you say, when you are afraid of losing your loved ones, it can be like someone is trying to take away the air you breathe!

Because of You

Because of you I breathe every day
Because of you at night I pray
Because of you I have a beautiful little daughter
Because of you you make me think smarter
Because of you I grew taller
Because of you I get larger
Because of you I can love
Because of you I will love
Because of you I thank God for you
Because of you I love you for what you do
Because of you it's hard to say
Because of you I think of you every day
Because of you I think about that smell of yo' spray
Because of you I broke my ankle and had to get an xray
Because of you my life goes on
Because of you is why I stay strong
Because of you is why I'm king of our throne
Because of you is why I wanna come home

-Maurice, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We felt like each of the lines from this poem could be the title of a poem themselves! It's like each one is the door to a mystery, a new chapter of your life that we don't know. What's an exampele of how you've gotten stronger? How did you break your ankle?

Think About It

Think about it before you say it
Think about it before I lay it
I try to be strong for what is wrong
But still I wish that I could come home
At night I try not to cry so what I do is close my eyes
Just to think about the times when you were mine
So just because I'm on the corner trying to sell a dime
You tell me that I'm wasting your time
Girl you must be crazy or something wrong with yo' head
Maybe you should think about it or go to bed
So calm down and listen to what I said.
These nights are long without you by my side
I thought you would ride or die
So until they let me go
Maybe that's when my love will show
And me and you will grow
So just let me know
How you feel about me
And baby you will see
What is our destiny
So just take my advice and do it
Or just sit back and think about it

-Maurice, 150 Crew

From The Beat: No more dimes on the corner, young sir. You are destined for bigger and better things! Just look at all the dreams and hopes that pulse in this poem... write us another poem now which tells us -- what awaits you "Beyond the Corner."

To My Baby Girl

To my baby girl you are the one that makes me thinks twice
That's why I try not to shoot dice
Because I know that you're the love of my life
My daughter is what you are
What is you to me, my good luck charm
That's why you are my wishing star
And someday I wish to buy you a car
So we have fun and laugh together that's what makes my world
So that's why I write this poem to my baby girl.

-Maurice, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your girl don't need a car/not even a caddy/all she wants is a fulltime daddy/someone to hum her a lullaby song/you'll be home before too long.

I try to be strong for what is wrong
But still I wish that I could come home

Ready To Change

I've been through hell and back
Leavin' that all behind ready to change the map
Livin' life the way it supposed to be
Wit' a purpose to stay alive and enjoy every min' of my life
I want to be a kid for once
Go back to high school
Get a job that I love doin'
Hang around wit' friends that care for me
Be wit' my man 'cause he's the only one that understands me
I want to be happy

-Littles, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: It sounds like you've learned a whole lot that will help you succeed in life, and achieve what you want — school, work that you like, caring friends, and a good man. Just remember that happiness comes from inside, so don't depend too much on others (especially that man) to "make you happy." They can all help, but in the end, your future is in your hands. Good luck.

Drugs Are My Disappointment

Drugs messed up my life
Mostly crystal meth
I was tweakin' all the time
I froze up one of my lungs
Ended up in the hospital
And I kept on using
I didn't care about death
Now I'm cravin' it in my rehab
I shake every time I think about it
Because of my choice of crystal meth
I am where I am
I've been locked up sp many times
I'm tired of it all because of crystal meth

-Lil' Skizz, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: We're so sorry you're still feeling the physical effects of not using, Lil' Skizz, but the mental effects are leaving you to think clearly for the first time in a long time, and that's all good. If you just keep remembering how you hated being locked up and how you put your very life at risk, then you'll know you're on a life-long change so you won't be tempted to go back to the old way. It is hard right now, but the payoff is enormous because will make everything about your life to come so much better.

Why

sometimes i cry
i find myself asking god why
why do my ninjas always die
why do people criticize
why can't the system give but it can deprive
i'm tired of waiting for help that will never arrive
sometimes i contemplate suicide
but i can't because my family need me alive
this world is a jungle, i was put here to survive
because on these streets it genocide
either you live or you die
a million personalities waiting to collide
some people hide
but the majority choose to ride
we playin' wit' our lives
whoever told us this game is fun they lied
when will we stop, it's up to us to decide

-Wayne, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Let the old you, the ways of thinking and seeing the world that led to what you used to do, commit suicide so that Wayne can finally come fully to life! That life in the street game was nothing but pleasure then pain, or sometimes just pain and pain — and now you see it's pain at the end of the game no matter how you playin'. But when you're ready to decide, it's not just your family that needs to see alive, but alive and freer when you get out of here, not just your family but you, too, need to see yourself decide you refuse to keep living by rules that lied, 'cause now you see a deeper truth inside your own heart and mind — and it's the power that will power you through this time.

Good-bye

The past is gone
The future is here
The technology has been upgraded
Now what
Are the machines going to take over
Are we
Is it going to be like the movies
Or are we going to be the owner
I say good-bye to the future
Technology is so high
Robots are here
Clowning
The scary thought are going to be coming
Are you ok
No!
You think life is gone
Your hope is gone
Higher risk of drugs are here
Say good-bye to everything
Your new thoughts are over

-Anonymous, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: Even though you didn't put your name on this poem, and even though you made a lot of spelling mistakes, we like that you are thinking about the world you live in, and the world that's coming. How do you want to fit into that new world?

Hoping For My Dad

This past week I have been going through a lot and thinking about a lot. Most of my thoughts have to do with my dad. I have had to realize that he is doing the best he can. He is an alcoholic but its not him, it is his disease. He was supposed to come visit, but I was expecting the worst, so my caseload worker decided to postpone the visit until I was really ready. I have been having to realize that I should expect the worst but prepare for the best.

-Kale, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: Maybe you should look at it the other way around, Kale: Expect the best but prepare for the worst... It is a sign of your emerging maturity (as well as your continuing sobriety) that you are able to look at your dad and not judge him for his disease, but hope that he gets the help he needs, as you are getting the help you need. One thing we've always found helpful when we are hurt by the people we love is to try to imagine them as children, and ponder the events in their lives that led them to become what they became. We can tell that you are strong, but even the strong sometimes have to put their heads down and cry. Keep growing!

My Nightmare

The fear of cops is always there. Me and my friends get together this one day, not really worried about the cops at the moment. We're walking down the street, and this guy starts talking shhh to us. We lay this ninja out, and next thing you know we're getting chased by the police. I'm running, running fast, but they get me when I try to duck into a cut.

Then I wake up and think to myself, "Just another nightmare." I remove the blanket that was covering my face, and I remember I'm locked up at YGC. I wasn't having a nightmare, I woke up in one.

-Franklin B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We think you have a real talent for expressing yourself in words, Franklin. We could easily picture what you were describing, so your ending surprised us. A nightmare within a nightmare! Damn! We hope this nightmare ends for you soon — and that you avoid the other kind of nightmare by figuring out a better way of dealing with insults than laying someone out! We hope you keep writing, though, because you have skills!

Hell and Back

I think I've been to Hell and back about three or four times. It's not a place to go.

What I experienced is something that no men or women want to experience. I been shot at more times than I can remember, then I've been beat by my father and jumped by enemies on the street. He did it to discipline me when I got in trouble.

He used to get drunk and do it for no reason, he did it to anybody in his way, even to my Momma.

I forgave him a little because he's my dad.

-Aone, 150 Crew

From The Beat. We don't know your dad, or what he went through to make him dependent on alchohol, or what made him angry enough inside to hit his child. If he was trying to discipline you, he must love you deep down... but no matter what, you don't deserve to be beat on by a person who is supposed to protect you. Your mom didn't deserve being hit either. Even the people who love us the most can make terrible mistakes. The fact that you forgive him is a good sign, because it shows the strenght and heart inside you. Still, you deserve a life free from danger, free from being beat on. Do you believe that and know it deep inside?

Hate-And-Be-Hated

I know there's people out there that hate me, and I know there's people that know I hate them. I really can't describe why I hate some one, but then I could... probably off of what they did to someone I know.

But then I really can't stay mad at someone forever 'cause there's always forgiveness, and where the hate comes from is from somewhere evil in you, like a evil spirit. So there should always be forgiveness, if you hate some one or be hated.

-Young B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: If hate comes from somewhere evil inside you, where does forgiveness come from? We admire you for seeing that forgiving those you hate — one of the hardest things to do — keeps you from being destroyed by hatred. How do you bring yourself to the point of forgiving?

If Everything Happens For A Reason...

Some people say that everything happens for a reason, but what is the reason for people doing what they are doing? How is that people love killing people and other things like that?

I love the way people think wrong about you so you have a chance to prove them wrong, so they can see that you want to do something with your life, like going to school, get a job, and do what you are supposed to do.

-Fat Rat B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Wondering about the truth of simple slogans (like "everything happens for a reason") shows that you are using your brain. We often say that the best "revenge" is proving the system wrong about its expectations, and becoming the person you know you can be. That's why using your brain is so important. Keep doing it!

I Am My Biggest Disappointment

My biggest disappointment... is me. I need to start thinking about my life and where I'm headed 'cause if I keep coming back to jail, I'm not doing anything with my life, and I'm going to end up somewhere I don't wanna be.

I've been locked up four times. But it took me being locked up this fourth time for me to really sit in my room and think about stuff that I really need to be contemplating on. And I came to the conclusion that I need to really get my life together. And that's what I'm gonna strive towards doing. But for now I gotta work on getting out of jail.

-April GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: At least you know where to start — and starting is always the hardest, but most important step. You don't have to work too hard on getting out because that is something that will happen in due time. But you do have to work on staying out. Maybe you weren't ready to think like an adult those other three times. But you're ready now, so keep putting your feet down one step at a time, and soon you'll be amazed at how far from here you can travel as you walk into adulthood. Good luck.

Where I've Been And Where I'm Going

Where I've been? Juvenile. Where I plan on going when I get out? Back home and getting this job that I have waiting for me getting paid $ 13.90 an hour helping little boys and girls with their homework which will extend my curfew. Also go to school, which I have been doing. Also I plan on staying in touch with The Beat Within so I can stay on the right track and also keep extra support when it's needed.

-Mike B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Wow, $13.90 an hour? That is good money Mike! Just remember that money is not easy to make when you are working the legit way, but you will feel so good when that pay check is handed to you. We hope that curfew extension is time you'll use wisely... You're always welcome to come by The Beat office and just chill with us. You have our support all the way!

What I've Missed

The start: October 21, 2004
Hopefully, the end: Before 2008 — my senior year of high school
The years of my high school were almost all ruined by the decisions I made, but...
The holidays I missed:
X-mas '04
New Years '05
Chinese New Year '05
Spring break '05
Summer '05 and '06
4th of July of '06
Just from being incarcerated

-Lil' E B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This brief list of "loss" tells it all, Lil' E. And since we know you, we know what you are capable of achieving. When we are children, we do things without thought of possible consequences. But those consequences can help us mature into the adults we become, and that is what is happening to you. You are seeing all that you have sacrificed for that momentary pleasure the child seeks. And so, when you face the world again with the eyes of a young man, making decisions for your own better future and your family's will be that much easier. Let this be the last lesson you'll have to learn in a lock-up. Keep your goals in mind and never give up on yourself.

Pregnant Too Young

My disappointment in life is how I got pregnant so young, and my baby daddy is younger than me. I not disappointed about my son. I love him. But the simple fact is I'm only 17, and I'm in Walden House.

My mom is taking care of him. My baby daddy is now in the Ranch and he's going to be there for at least a year. I feel like he missing a lot of our son's life and I'm not going sit here and lie and say that I can do it by myself. I mean I can't. I need his help, need him to be there — not his mom, not his sister or my mom and dad. I would really like him to be around here to help me. So that's my biggest disappointment in life.

-Jeannine, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: You have a good sense of reality and why it would have been better to wait to have your baby. But since you already have him, we only want to urge you to take all the help you can get. (This is true for every young mother wherever she is.) Of course you need the father's help (and the baby needs a father), but you also need the help of all his family and all yours, too. The old African saying, "It takes a village to raise a child" is absolutely true. So do your program, hope for your baby's daddy to do his, and then be the best mother you can be, and be thankful for all the help you can get!

When Mom Does Dope

My biggest disappointment in life is when my mom is doing dope. When she does dope, it makes me feel bad and dirty.

-John Doe Juggalo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Those who claim that dope addiction is a victimless crime, cannot be thinking of the parents of children.

Hate Selfish

yes you can hate someone you don't know
if you meet him and get a bad vibe you won't
probably ever accept him
at one time maybe you'll think he's cool
but he won't ever work for nothin' his self
he selfish even after he's hit wit' a gauge shell
some people gotta be hurt or shot
to find out they're touchable
no invincible and sometimes even that and jail
won't help
if you a lazy untrustworthy
wannabe crazy punk who thinks he's tough and sly
you'll maybe be better off when you die

-Buddamilk, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This poem wades in, hitting hard, teaching that so-called untouchables aren't half as smart as they'd like think, all about the money and the high, self-centered if not self-serving till the day they die. Unable to learn their lesson and claim their blessing in life, it's like they're married to hate, like a man to wife.

She Is Me

She is me
It's the answer to my heart without the key
She is me
I am my own person
I'm not that girl that's in jail
She is me, I'm going through hell
I'm locked up with these white walls, I feel like I'm curled up in a shell
She is me
What's my crime? They say you do the crime, you serve the time
But I didn't commit the crime
Why does my life end up on the bad part of the stick
Little rooms with white bricks
All these messy chicks
Juvenile hall
My life is like the basketball court without the ball
She is me, is it a bad thing
See what my good side of my life brings
They always say you do good things, you get good things in return
I look back and I didn't do all the bad things and it burns
In my life I see a missing part to the puzzle
It's in the middle
It's also little
It's in my heart
She is me
You got to look at the bright side and be smart
But won't you look at me
She is me!

-Tabatha, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's so hard when what "they" say just doesn't prove true in life. Sometimes we have to make up our own rules—as long as they help us to cope with our situations, there's no reason not to believe in them. We see you and hear you.

My Daughter And Change

What it do Beat? This ya boy Young Jeff up here in SF/YGC maximum security B5. It's cool up here. I'm in here wit' my ninjas. It's my ninja birthday today. He turned 17, so I want to say happy birthday. I know how it feel to be in here on yo' b-day.

I been here four years straight fo' my b-day, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Halloween. My ninja a Leo, feel me. But me, I'm a Scorpio. My birthday November 2nd but I just wanna say just 'cause you have yo' b-day in here, you still gotta smile, 'cause no matter what, life goes on fo' real. I know it ain't cool to be in here on yo' birthday. People wanna be out wit' a fresh fit, fresh everything, big weed, big drank. But if you trip you still livin', feel me.

Like me, I used to say I'm gonna be in prison when my mother die 'cause I felt I wasn't worth livin'. But now that I have a daughter, I have to live fo' her, feel me? Somehow, some way, something going to change like spending another birthday in here. What's go' make me change is my baby girl. My ninja got a daughter too, feel me, an' he on that same hype. Forget bangin' and runnin' tha streets 'cause when it all comes down to it, ain't nobody gon' be there wit' you but yo' family.

So a way to stay out of jail is think of something that's important to you, like a birthday or family member. But I'm gone. Next time you gonna hear from me is in the Ranch. But to all, stay up, 'specially all tha homies doin' time. We all go' get through this. Stay strong. I'm out.

-Young Jeff B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You are right, Jeff, there is no way to continue your lifestyle and also be the father you want to be. You can't do a little of one or a little of the other. You are either a full-time father, or you aren't a father at all. We admire you for understanding that you now have a new life to be responsible for, and that responsibility requires you to sacrifice some things that have been important to you in the past, but which have give way to other things that are more important to you now. We hope you can spend your next birthday at home with your daughter on your lap.

Living Life As You Should

I feel that you can hate someone if they totally disrespect you or if it's a gang or turf war. You can hate 'cause you are obligated to do so. There's none that I know of that hates me. That's because I'm cool with everybody and don't be on the streets too much. Hate comes from envy and jealousy. If you're church going or living through Christ I think you can love anyone other wise for others it might be hard but probable.

-Otis, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wouldn't we all end up hating each other if hate came from obligation? What would be the point of the Civil Rights Movement or the Women's movement if everyone is just going to believe what they are told they should believe. You know what you need to do to stay away from the mess and it sounds like you are doing it so keep up the good work. And remember that hope and salvation come in many forms so even if you found yours in Christ it might not be the best path for another man.

Looking For A Better Life

Life is too short to be making big mistakes.
Forget robbing - why not just earn what you make?
Trust me its worth it.
Nobody gets locked up on purpose.
I don't wanna be in prison
Looking over my shoulder
Because I know someone lurking.
So when I get out I'm gonna try to do my best.
Get a job and stop being a pest.

-Anthony, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Right on Anthony. Your piece is straight to the point and you grab your readers' attention right from the start. We also don't know too many folks who want to come to jail. There is a better life out there and we are glad to hear you ready to start working for what you deserve – peace and happiness.

Getting What I Needed

I started off at a young age.
Hustling on the corner trying to get paid.
Moms wasn't eatin' so I got fed.
On the block hustlin' and take it to my grave.
The older heads told me stay in school
But I said forget it I'm down fool.
Not goin' to school so who was I to prove?
My life is hard in the streets, get rich or die tryin'.
And the bra blessed me wit' signs.
But I kept on hustlin' not fryin'.
Missing the signs the Lord put in front of my eyes.
I'm glad that I'm in jail.
'Cause if not I would either be six feet below.
I'm glad that I'm in jail
Or I could be incarcerated in prison without bail.
I'm just writing to say everything is a sign
That the Lord put there and
The Lord gives everybody a sign and a chance in life
Take it.
Life is too short that bull.

-Young Chase, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Some times we get exactly what we need in the strangest of places. If someone had told you jail is where you needed to be in order to start thinking straight you probably wouldn't have believed him or her. We agree with you too that signs are usually there to let us know what we should and shouldn't be doing but we choose whether or not to pay attention to them. Your piece sounds so hopeful and we really like that. You have found a way to revive your faith so hold on tight to your beliefs.

No Way Out

What's up Beat? This my first time really writing so just check it out. If ya feel what I'm saying than ya do. If ya don't I don't care! Beat I'm going to keep it real wit' ya man. I got in this game hella young and now I'm stuck in it. There's no way out.

I started hanging out with the wrong crowd I really didn't have no choice, shhh, I come from the projects feel me! The streets chose me on the real it was either be down or get put down. I grew up watching my family struggle of food stamps and getting boxes of food from the neighborhood churches.

This is my second time in the hall waiting to get released. I've been to foster homes and group homes.

The sad thing is once you play the game you gotta play 'till it's over whether you from the turf or gang bang. The streets somehow always know where to find you and they always bring you back. So my advice is don't enter if you ain't already in it. That's why I say, my man I'm stuck like chuck, ya dig?

-Young Iceberg, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thank you for writing. We are always eager to hear new voices and new ideas. Remember that you are not the first or the last to get into the game young and some of those who got in got out. It is not impossible because there are people who have done it. They didn't have superpowers - they just worked harder than you are willing to work at this point. Don't give up on yourself. Don't make excuses. Do we think it's fair that you have been through so much so soon? Of course not but do not let your hardship define what you won't do. Let it make you stronger.

Why?

Why I got to be in juvenile hall?
Why I can't I break my leg when I fall?
Why can't I be out playing football?
Why the ladies can't give me no number to call?
Why when I leave the house, I have to go to the mall?
Why did my brah Rob have to go?
Why Ron have to shoot at 5.0?
Why is everybody talking about ninety?
Why did sis Ke Ke crash into that pole?
Why can't my little brother make the Honor Roll?
Why do everybody in the town where Girbauds?
Why do girls that ain't got no home got to be a ho?
Why do everybody say little Tommy go?

-Lil' Tommy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There's obviously a lot on your mind, a lot of questions. But now is the time to start coming up with answers. It sounds like being locked up has shown you how quickly you can lose the big and the little things. It also sounds like you have lost a lot of friends, some of which could have avoided their fate by making better choices. We don't want to minimize your losses because we know how much that hurts and how hard that must have been for you. It's unfair and it's hard but learn from what you are experiencing, what you are seeing. Don't make the same mistakes over and over again.

Don't, Wonna, Be, Here

What's up Beat. This yo' boy Donjurae. This is my second time in the hall and I don't want to be here. I made mistakes in the past but I've learned from them now because if you don't learn the first time, you will be back a second time. I am just mad that it took me two trips to the hall to lean my lesson. In some ways I am glad because I've learned from it. What don't kill you can only make you stronger.

I blame no one for me being in here because I got my own mind and I make my own decisions. I chose to do what I did. My mom did all she could do to keep me out of trouble. So I thank her for that. She came see me every visiting day and came to all my court days. I love her for that and she is one of my best friends. Now when I get out I got to try my best to do good and to stay out of trouble. I know it would put a smile on my mom's face. I also want to thank God. In Jesus name Amen.

-Donjurae, 150 Crew

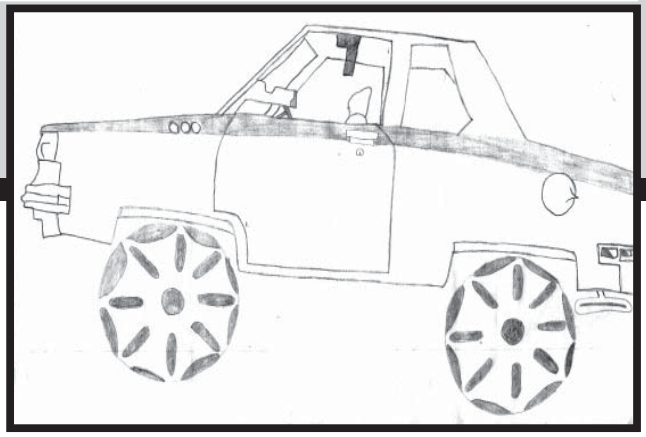
From The Beat: We really like the line, "If you don't learn the first time, you will be back a second time." It really sticks out because it is so true and you know that better than we do. You are very lucky to have such a strong woman like your mother by your side. Not many people have a support system like this one and we can hear in your writing that you appreciate that fact. You are taking responsibility for your actions, you realize what you should have done and you are ready to make some changes. So now the only thing left is to do it. We know you can and remember two trips is better than three to have to learn your lesson.

Losing The Most Important Thing To Us

My biggest disappointment is when my girl got pregnant. I guess we were not ready because she was taking pain pills while she was pregnant and I was not out there to tell her that she shouldn't do that. One day she went to go check on the baby and they told her that the baby did not have a heartbeat. I did not find out until I called her. When she found out it was me she started to cry. She could not even tell me what happened 'cause she was crying so hard.

-Stone Face, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We know that you feel very guilty about not being there for your girl before and after she lost the baby. It's hard because there are moments we would give anything in the world to go back in change. The pain is so real and so raw we would do anything to make it go away but the only thing we can do is learn from it and move on. You are about to hit a real crossroads when you get out. We hope you are ready to be a better man and stop making the same mistakes.



Biggest Disappointment

The biggest disappointment in my life is when I got locked up for some stupid stuff that I shouldn't have done. I should've stand with my first mind and should've never went with my friends to go do what we did. Now I'm in here.

Don't know how much time I'm about to do. I hope it's not years, because I am not made for jail. It's not for me. But some people like coming here because they get three meals a day, don't have to look over their shoulder, and they have somewhere to stay.

But for me, jail is not me. This my first time doing time, and it's not me. So when I get out I am going to change my life around because I have a son to look after. I want to be there for him because my dad wasn't there for me and I want to be a dad to my son. So I hope I get out soon so I can take care of my business.

-Dre Doojah B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We hope you get out soon, too, so that you can begin the hard work of being a responsible father. That "stupid stuff" you did to get in here, we hope, was the last of thinking like a child, doing what you like doing whatever the consequences. Now, as you have clearly seen, those consequences affect more than just you. Let your absent father be negative motivation you need not to repeat the past, and let your son be the positive motivation you need to make those changes you know you have to make. Good luck!

Can You Love Someone You Don't Know?

Let me change this topic a little - can you love some one and not know anything about them? My answer is yes because I've done it. I met this girl one day, and like two months later I told her I loved her. I was shocked I did that because saying that was a first for me. She was solid; she was different from any other woman that I had talked to and how I found that out was by telling her I loved her.

As time went by, feelings got stronger and she got more emotional and more demanding. While all this was going on I didn't even know her favorite color, favorite food, her dislikes or the thing that made her sad, her strong. I didn't even know her weak points in school. But I do know that I loved her, always will. The reason I say that is if you say you love some one then turn around and say you don't love them anymore then you never really loved them. My answer to the first question is YES!

-Byrd, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This was a really fun piece to read. We like how you took the topic and made it into your own. You definitely have a unique storytelling style that grabs your readers' attention. We agree that love is a powerful and mysterious emotion – there is simply no easy way to explain it. You listed all of the things that you didn't know about this young woman you loved so much, which we thought was an interesting way to show just how powerful love can be. But it would have been nice to hear just a couple of things that made this young woman so special to remind us why love is so great.

Don't Judge Me, Respect Me

Well I'm going to put it like this - a person should not judge another person by the way they look or the by their color. You always have to understand people from were they coming from because you can't kill nobody just because you don't like how they dress or how they think. You can't control people - if they don't wanna do what you want them to do, you got to respect that.

-Man-Man, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Life is such a precious thing. We know that made sound a little sappy but when you think about it, deep down you know it's true. Anyone who has lost someone close to them definitely knows this is true. It sounds like you really understand the value of life and the kind of man you want to be. Keep using your head - you are on the right track.

Life's Hard, Then You Die

What it do Beat? This is yo' boy, Lil' Juanito, coming at y'all one time, man. I'm in this cesspool, marinatin' with some loved ones. We doin' our thug thang, making the best out of the situation at hand. Now fo' The Beat topic: Life is full of disappointments.

I'm speaking years of existence. Sometimes I don't even know how to handle the stress obstacles bring, so I do the only thing that brings peace in my mind — smash! So far I've had more disappointments than anything. It seems like every time I turn around it's another disappointment. I now look at them as something normal in my life, especially since you can do shhh about 'em but to roll wit' the punches. One love. (Forget the world!)

-Lil' Juanito, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thanks for coming with what's real. Your piece about disappointments in life, doesn't disappoint the reader, even if it is depressing as what! We don't know why you say there's nothing to be done about it though. As we see it, you're unwilling to make that fundamental turn of mind that would give you a starting point to undo some of the mass of disappointments afflicting you. We say with love, to a hard-headed thug who's too young to just give up on what his life still could become.

Keeping It Real

Let's keep it real! Ay Mister, you don't like me because I am a gangsta. I know it's good on the top ten now! What you going to do now? Whatever you do, it's okay — I made it without yo' help! So just know that.

You can't stop me Mister, even if I'm not on a top ten, I am always on my top ten. You feel me? You know what I am talking about? You got to keep it real. The Bible says, "Be sincere in your love for others. Hate everything that is evil and hold tight to everything that is good. Let your hope make you glad. Obey the rulers who have authority over you. Only God gives authority to anyone." So, Mister, everything's going to be okay for me because I have a lot of faith.

You don't know what sort of time we live in or what kind of life I'm living. Just because you're older than me, don't mean you can judge me, or anybody else. Only God can judge me, Mr. Know Everything. But a man like me can forgive people like you. You think you know me, but y'all really don't know me like that! So stop it.

-Choyce, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If proving someone who judges you to be wrong about you helps motivate you to do what's right, use it as a goad, a spur in your side, to keep you energized in your pursuit of doing what's right — and your Biblical quotation makes clear what you put your faith in as the right way to feel and act! In the long run, your faith and desire alone will be enough, and you won't need the spur of opposition to motivate you. In your heart, opposition will melt away as you shine with the brightness and heat of the sun. You will witness good and evil but overcome with love.

Ninja's Hating

You can hate somebody you don't know because of something they do. Most people be like, "I hate that ninja," because he got something they want or he took his girl. That's how it be for some people, they just hate too see you do better than them. Instead of a ninja saying, "Bra that's clean," or "Bra I'm try to buy that too," they want to hate on you. That's just how it is 'cause people are full of hate and ninjas don't never accept that you got more than them or are doing better than them. They always want to hate. Can't stop hating.

Ninja's be hating because they wish they were you...
Ninjas be hating because they wish they could do what you do...
Ninjas be hating but they ain't goin to say it's true...
Ninjas be hating that's just what they do.

-Lil' Chad, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We hate to agree with you but jealousy is as vicious and overpowering as any drug. There are certain neighborhoods where folks are just fighting over crumbs when really they should be looking outward cause there is an entire pie out there that they deserve a piece of. Hate is just unproductive – it usually doesn't hurt the person it is intended for and destroys the person who is doing the hating.

Traviesa's Back

Traviesa's back up in Alameda Hall
Gots to do time stand tall through it all
Back up in this again
For hitting the pipe with my friends
Caught another case
So I'm back up in this place
Violated my probation
'Cause the pipe was my temptation
The day after I got out
Got picked up by my homie Capu at my house
Left for 20 min(utes) to get high and fly
Tho' I went back home
Parents still called my P-O
Next day my homegirls from Half Moon Bay
Gatita and Nicolasa
Came to visit me at my casa
To say what's up y que pasa
A knock came ay my door
And guess who it was for
Handcuffs and I'm like what the ef?!
Searched from head to feet
And was put in the backseat
Of the 5.0
Back to Alameda County I go
So now I'm back here
Closing my eyes tryin' not to show a tear
All alone with no one by my side
Waitin' for letter from my homies that said they'll write
And have my back 'till the day they die
Turns out they lied
It just makes me want to cry
So now I trust no vato and fear no ruca
I'm stickin' to myself
Don't need nobody's help
Feelin' like what the homegirl Dreams wrote
"Losin my mind
I'm in my cellblocks just doing hard times
Losin' my mind
I'm goin' loca everyday and every night!"
What's up to Hillcrest Jail
Especially the one's I was locked up with in San Mateo
My time's up
I wish all y'all luck
Until next week
I'm out with these last seven words.
Alratos...

- Traviesa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: La Traviesa, yes you are back - unexpected, surprised? Probably not. What can we say? We're not going to lecture you about how you should be good or how you should do the right thing. You should be telling yourself all these things. The truth of the matter is, you are in control of your life. You'll stop coming to the Hall when you decide that you've had enough. You are a beautiful writer and extremely smart, but continue to make stupid decisions. We only hope you save yourself before it's too late.

Complicated

Hey, what's up Beat? What makes my life complicated is that I was here in juvenile hall when my baby was born. That makes my life so hard because I wasn't there to see him when he was born. I've seen him only once. I won't see him again for a few weeks. That's what makes my life so hard for me. I want to see him again.

-Young Pops, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: We understand and we hope you get a chance to go home soon, and do it all right next time. Your lack of freedom affects more than yourself, now. Please – do the right thing.

Fixing Things

dreams that used to be dreams
unseen to the unseen
dreams that are unseen
are unseen to some dreamers
that dream all beautiful dreams
all beautiful dreams
are not all beautiful
to all the dreamers that dream these dreams
hopefully one day
i can help make all your dreams beautiful

-Jacob, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Just as dreams are sometimes woven so densely their meaning seems almost impenetrable, so does this poem — until your romantic twist at the end promises to fix things.

Describe Your Biggest Disappointment In Life

I am so disappointed in myself because I keep making unrealistic goals for myself.

I keep making goals that I'm not accomplishing. I was so close to being on level three. I got over excited I started being bad again like kicking and banging and cursing. It was 'cause I was just over excited because my birthday is tomorrow and I was excited 'cause my mom finally came to visit me after three whole months. So, just too many things happening at once. But I gone learn how to control my impulses and get back on track, try to maintain my program and start being good.

I'm getting tired of being in jail and away from my family. I been here too long. When I get out I'm going to follow my moms direction, go to school and quit being out on the block and stuff. So that's all.

-Young Que-Que, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Good, but what makes you think you can do good? You weren't able to do it before. Start small – make some small changes in your behavior while you are in the Hall and gradually change your behavior. If you don't, you know the consequences. So, take responsibility for every action that you take and enjoy the rewards or suffer the consequences.

Forgotten Memories

As days go by I remember when I was young. I had my older brother Miguel, baby brother John, my sisters Kaisha and Natasha, and my mom and dad. We had good times and bad times but we came through the rain. When I went to high school I started kicking it with the homeboys. I was only fifteen and got in. Since this day I proved I stand tall

I won't lie - I seen homies die left and right, yet my pride took the best of me. It's messed up that most of my homies did me dirty and even though I learned I didn't learn well enough 'cause I am here.

Time goes on and I am tying to do cool so I can help my family 'cause my family needs money. I ain't saying I'm scared or a punk. I'm being honest and truthful. Putting my family before any body else.

I want to give a shout out to my dead homies. Being locked up ain't cool; it makes you think more about others and yourself at the same time. I want to thank The Beat for giving me the opportunity to speak freely.

-Young homie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Looking out for your family is what makes you a strong young man. A real man has his priorities in check and family should always be at the top of the list. You should also be proud of yourself for having the courage to share what's on your mind. We all make mistakes. We all trust the wrong people. We all get lost but you are coming around and are on the right path. Be proud that you are learning from your mistakes. It's so easy to get caught up so stay on your toes. Remember that your life, your happiness and your family are worth fighting for. And the homies, as you have seen, aren't the ones who are going to help you obtain your dreams.

No One In Thought

Who do I hate? No one in thought
Myself, I don't hate, but it is my own fault
The reason I'm here was my own mistake
I can't blame no one I have no reason to hate
I can't say I hate myself, because I don't
It was a mistake, but I'm a still ride with the flow
I've seen what I've done, so I've decided a change
I'm in the game, but it's time to play the game a different way
No one is perfect--it's like shootin' hoops
'Cause in life everyone makes mistakes—I'm sure that's true
It's like Tetris, because when you reach the peak
Stackin' chips, livin' life in the end
It's game over, rest in peace

-Kali, Marin

From The Beat: Nice piece Kali! It is so good to hear in yoru poem that you have the desire to fix the mistakes and poor choices that you have made.. Others keep on making the same mistakes until something huge hit their lives. Which of these two ways will you learn from, the good or hard way? What's done is done. And what next is what you need to start taking seriously before you ended up learning from your mistakes the hard way.

What I Was . . . And What I'm Gonna Be

Before I got locked up in here, I was out partying every other day, going crazy, doing drugs, selling drugs, making hella money over the summer. I was the thizz man. I was doing too much stupid shhh, and it all caught up to me; got me locked up is where it all got me.

But when I get out, I'm a slow thangs down, put certain things on pause, and get my priorities straight. I'm tryna be somebody and I will. I'm a go to college, I'm a set a good future for myself, I'm a be a successful "sound engineer." In the future, I'm a be making hella money in the right way. I'm a have a job I like, working with music, my passion, and you know what? I'm a do it big.

-The Rollin' Stoner, Marin

From The Beat: Now that you have a lot of time to think, slow things down, can you take a realistic look at your life and see where it's taking you? Let's say you slow down for a minute, accomplish many things, make a difference in your life. What will be next after slowing down? Are you going to do the same things that got you in here? We hope not. Keep us posted in capturing your dream!

Free

When I was free I was always on the move.
Doing a fool
I was shining and I miss that freedom,
and now I'm locked up doing time.
I stress so much and now I got nothing.
All I see is the same people I don't even know
and yet I live wit' them.
Sometimes life could be good
sometimes life could be worse
but you just have to ride it out
and prepare for the worst , hope for the best
and get out of jail and put it to the test.
Because all I know is that I am the best.

-Lil' Drew, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We know you just wrote this as a regular piece, but it had so much rhythm to it we couldn't help breaking it up into a poem. You capture that feeling of confusion perfectly - the question is, do you really think going back to "doing a fool" is the best way to handle your freedom when it first comes back?

Oh So Complicated

My life seemed so simple on the outs – a nice car, friends, a girl friend, money – you feel me. Well, guess what?

In ten seconds, everything I worked so hard for was taken from me for the simple fact that I had to live the fast life – drink, smoke, drugs.

Was it worth it? No, hell no.

What you going to do when welfare and food stamps won't get you through it? Better have a 9 to 5, drive a nice car, and have a family than end up in here, like me.

Where I'm going I don't know, but let me tell you – when I go to court in a few days, I pray to God that I get one more chance to live the simple life, with no more crime, or complications. I'm done with the fast life. Time to chill out. Peace.

-Josh, 150 Crew

From The Beat: So what's your plan Josh? As they say, it's easy to talk. But action is often more difficult. Do you know what you'll say when temptation knocks on the door? Because it will. Are you ready for it, if you get that one more chance?

'Till

'Till I continue on
I'll still look at the sky and reach to a cloud
Sleep 'til no more tears
Lord take me home
'Till I continue on
I'll collect all these tears and drop
Bury all this pain away
And watch my shadows become my soul
'Till I continue on
I sing wit' rich melody
Love wit' so much effect
Cater to who?
Maybe these mistakes I'll rue
'Till I continue on
I'll walk that route
Maybe alone
But together with myself
'Til I continue on

-Lil Mainy the Prince, 150 Crew

From The Beat: And one day as you walk alone, you'll discover that you were never as lone as you thought, because you sang as you walked, and the songs drew people to you. Peace.

No Comprendido

Hace tiempo vine a SF buscando trabajo, pero no lo encontre. No tenía para comer, no tenía para la renta y necesitaba ayudarle a mi madre. Por eso empece a vender drogas. La gente me critica por eso, pero ello no sabían la necesidad que tenía. Lo que hacía era mantenerle el vicio a los perdidos.

From The Beat: ¿Te has dado cuenta lo que has dicho en la última frase de tu escritura? La gente te critica porque al hacer lo que hacía estabas cooperando con la maxima destrucción del hombre. Sabias que las drogas es una de las grandes causas por las cuales las calles estan infectada de tanta tristeza, violencia y desastres? Si no lo sabías deberías de infórmarte.

I Don't Understand

A while back, I came to San Francisco looking for work, but I couldn't find any. I didn't have anything to eat, I didn't have money to pay rent, and I needed to help out my mother. That's why I started to sell drugs. People criticize me for doing so, but they don't know about the needs that I had. What I used to do is continue supplying the drugs to support the habits of those who are lost.

-Franklin B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Have you realized what you have said in the last sentence of your piece? People criticize you because by doing what you were doing, you were cooperating with the maximum destruction of a fellow human being. Did you know that drugs are one of the biggest causes as to why the streets are infected with so much sadness, violence, and disasters? If you didn't know this, you should inform yourself.

En El Camino Hacia Acá

El peligro que corre cada niño de mi paíz de Hondura es muy grande porque tienes problemas con las pandillas. También tienes problemas con los policias corruptos que hay en el camino hacia aqui. Cuando la policia te agarra, te pregunta si tienes dinero y te lo roban. Luego te deportan. Hace veces que te matan solo por no traer dinero.

Las pandillas se suben al tren y los asaltan a todos. El que no quiere dar su dinero, lo tiran del tren, los golpean, y luego te matan solo porque no le distes dinero.

A las mujeres la violan y aveces hasta las matan cuando ellas gritan durantes son forzadas a tener sexo a la fuerza.

Todo lo que les he dicho es verdad. Yo pase por todo esto. Gracias a Dios estoy con vida aqui en San Francisco.

From The Beat: Esto si que es terrible. Podemos ver que para llegar hasta acá tubistes que pasar sobre muchas cosas terrible. ¿Crees que valio la pena haber pasado por todo lo que pasastes? ¿Supistes aprovechar el hecho que llegastes aqui con vida? Si pasastes por todo esto, porque no tomastes lo sucedido en consideración y poder haber hecho lo correcto. Desgraciadamente el mundo está bien corrumpido y cosas terrible como estas pasan diario y a cada hora. ¿Crees que haya alguna salida para todo esto?

On The Journey To Here

The danger that every child from my country of Honduras runs the risk of is very big because you have problems with gangs.

You also have problems with the corrupt cops that can be found on the journey to this place. When the police capture you, they ask you if you have money and they rob you of it. Then they deport you. There are times when they have killed people just because they didn't have any money.

The gangs hope on the train and they assault everyone. Whoever doesn't want to give up their money, the gangs throw them off the train, they beat them up, and then they kill you just because you didn't give them your money.

As for the women, they violate them, and they even go as far as killing them when they scream when they are forced to have sex with them.

Everything that I have told y'all is the truth. I went through all of this. Thanks to God, I am with life here in San Francisco.

-Carlos B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is definitely terrible. We can see that in order to come all the way to this country, you had to go through many terrible things. Do you believe that it was worth it to go through all those things to come to this country? Did you know how to take advantage of the fact that you came here with your life? If you went through all this, then why didn't you take what happened into consideration and been able to do what's right? Unfortunately, the world is very corrupt and terrible things like this take place daily and every hour.

Letting Time Do Me

Hey, it's me, Lil' Seven, just chilling, doing my time. Well, no, letting time do me. It is just a day that goes by and we don't do anything but sit here and wait. But I don't trip because I know that one day I am getting out and will be with my family. I don't care if I am dead or alive. I will get out one day. Just keep your eyes open. If you have a heart for this life – ha ha – play the game. It's do or die. Hey, 'cause I am losing my mind.

-Uriel, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We care whether you're dead or alive. We prefer you alive. You were having a rough day when you wrote this. We've known you a while. And we like you. If you're going to have to spend some time away from your family, we think you should be using that time to educate yourself. You have a strong will. You taught yourself to read and write. Now get really serious about reading. Read and read and read. You could come out with a degree, maybe two of them. Please think about it.

Make My Mom Proud

Most of my memory of the past are with my friends. I only remember hanging out with them. The thing now is what I'll do after Juvy, because this my first time. I'm going to try to change my life as hard as I can, because I don't want my mom to worry about me no more. She visits me every day and worries about me. I'm going to make her proud of me no matter what it takes.

-Michael B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We're sorry you've had to learn this lesson the hard way, Michael, but it sounds like you really have learned it. You know what you did to give the system the power to take you from your mom and make her sad. So that means you also know what you have to do (or stop doing) to put that smile back on her face. If you find yourself here again, it's on you. So follow through and make your mom proud of her son.

Do You Know Me

Do you think you know me
'Cause I'm Latin and black, or just a drunk-ass Latino who don't know jack
Do you think you know me 'cause I kick it an' don't listen
Or do you think you know me 'cause I'm trying to come with that new revision
Do you think you know me 'cause I ain't got no love for my dad
I ain't trippin' off of him, and I ain't mad or sad
Do you think you know me because my heart is cold
But you can always see the pain and sorrow in my eyes that getting old
Do you think you know me because I live a solo life rolling by myself in a stolo by myself past enemies turf after midnight
Do you think you know me 'cause most of the time I don't talk
Actions speak louder than words so I walk the walk
Do you think you know me of my messed past
Group and foster homes until my step mom got a hold of me and I held on fast
Do you think you know me 'cause I chose to be closer to my Latino side
Or it's been 11 years since the last time I cried
Do you think you know me because I'm a Capricorn
December 26, 2:36 a.m. was when I was born
Do you think you know me... you don't know shhh
But please don't try to stereotype me by what I just told The Beat Within

-Lil' Shadow B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It would be very hard to stereotype you with so many different facets of your life that you reveal to us here. Some of those facets make us sorry that you've had to grow up in such a cold world. Some of them make us wish you were making different choices. But mostly, we worry that if you continue down the path your on (creeping after dark, stealing cars, etc.), then we'll never really get to know you at all, because your young life will be cut short, either by the darkness of a prison cell, or the darkness of the grave.

They Keep Coming Back

Still up in here. It's just so funny how I see the same people come back again, and again. Some of these people have been with me in every unit I been in. It's like we grew up in here. From the lowest unit to the biggest, it's like going from elementary unit to the high school unit. And another thing is we say we don't like this place, but yet we keep coming back again and again. It's like you leave just to come back. Think about it.

-Victor B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: When you move from grade to grade, from elementary to high school, you're supposed to learn a little more with each passing year. Is that true here, too? Have you learned more with each move from unit to unit? Or is wisdom just coming to you now, because it truly does sound like you are thinking about it. Thinking about things is a sign of growing up — a way of saying that maybe the way you've been thinking about things needs an adjustment. At least, that's what we see in this piece and that's what we hope your thoughts will take you. Keep thinking, Enano. Keep thinking.

Why I Gangbang

My plan to making it out through YA is to get my GED and go to firecamp.

And to keep it on my mind to get out sooner or later, so I can take care of my family. That is what my plan is when I get out in 2008-9, hoping I will not Max out to my 8 years.

I'm a gangbanger you know, and I will get into fights if I don't keep my trap shut. Or if a person knows me from another gang, they will tell some of they friends and they will want to fight me because of what I bang.

Because I have no family so I want to gangbang so I can have a family, my family is my brother by sister and mother, so that's why I wanted to gangbang, so I can have more family.

-Sarillo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It makes sense, at a time in your life, you thought that the gangbanging lifestyle could give you security, family, loyalty, all the things a young boy needs. But it turns out it didn't get you anything but trouble: Lockup, fights, tears, and now you say that your affiliation might make you get more time, and get into fights? That's terrible! That's not what family is all about, is it? Don't you deserve better?

Life Ain't What it Seems — in Two Parts

1. Life ain't always what it seems, most people would do anything for cash.

Some will steal, some will kill. Whatever it takes. I know I made some mistakes but I am willing to do whatever it takes to change my way of thinking.

Sitting here in max, I thought my life was over. 16 years is a long time to be looking at only sixteen, but moms keeps me going and tells me that life ain't what it seems. It's always time for a change.

So I just sit in my cell and try to better myself the best way I can.

Because life ain't what it seems.

2. When you're out of time you feel like you lost, like you are in a tunnel that will never end and all the time you spend cutting class smoking weed and poppin' pills, and the clock is still tickin'. It's like you have a time limit on life.

I know life don't get off to a good start for everybody, but you can do what ever it takes to change that. See me, I been in jail all my teenage life, but it's not the end of the world, it's still some changes that need to be made, but in order to make them I have to get out because first it's the hall, the county and next it's the pen.

And all the time you spend in these institutions and you finally get that long prison term you say, damn, out of time.

-Big Joe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: No lie, 16 years is a long time. But it also means you'll only be 32 when you get out, and that is so young – young enough to go to college, met a woman, be a father... make a life for yourself. And during that time on lockdown, you can do so much: Teach yourself new languages, read, study college courses, continue to feed your mind, your heart, your soul, even in the jail life, because if you can find yourself there, you'll never lose yourself again. Peace Big Joe, we'll be looking for you in The Beat Without.

Long Way From Home

It's a long way from home
where I am at right now.
And when I get home
things are going to be different for me.
Life is not going to be the same.
When I think about the outs I get mad,
knowing that I have a family waiting for me.
It's just a matter of time,
but it's been a long time already.
It's like I'm on a mission to get home,
but time has denied my way there.
The only way out is up to one man,
and it's hard to live when you know
one man holds your future in his hand.
But I hope things work out for me,
so I can get on with my life.
I am still waiting, but it's a long way home.

-Fatboy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There's an old poem about a man on a horse who is exhausted, but he is on a long journey, trying to get home. It goes: "I've got promises to keep/and miles to go before I sleep"... You too, you have promises to keep.

I touch my face
and see if my face still exists
Then use my pencil to comfort my paper
Yesterday I was so emotional
my heart missed

Stacked Against Us

The most of one race that comes to jail is
Blacks.
Because we're dumb enough to fall in the
White man's trap.
All he does is sit back and wait 'till we fall
In his lap.
So he could be like yeah he's
Finished.
But my fellow brothers stop being
Ducks.
Do something positive, not negative.
And move on to something new and stop becoming a
Slave.

-Young Chase, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It is not always easy to be thought-provoking and concise but you have made a powerful statement without using many words. We take our hats off. We think that all young people, black, white, brown, blue, need to make better choices. It is no secret that system is not always fair and people of color often end up with the short end of the stick but that is no reason for us to give up and stop trying to do better.

The Tip

Revering that again I wake up alone
I wipe my eyes wishin' to look outside but
These bars and fogged window cover my view
I touch my face and see if my face still exists
Then use my pencil to comfort my paper
Yesterday I was so emotional my heart missed
Just my world I live in
My life is my hope
My hope is my dreams
Before night I sleep and write
And start over wit' these
Same things

-The Prince, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When you use your pencil to comfort your paper, as you so poetically put it, you also bring comfort to other people who's heartache you've just put into words. So the act of writing, even in solitude, becomes and act of bringing people together.

To The Young Ones

To the young ones live and enjoy it.
Just because you're here today, you're not promised tomorrow
You today, you're not promised tomorrow
You don't want to leave your family feeling sorrow
There are too many youngstas dying in the streets of Oakland
So think about it before you start smoking
People killing other people just to earn some respect
They just need to put it to a test
It's a shame how many of our black men are dying
Everybody-- there are 70 more deaths this year,
And we are not even tryin'
To make a difference.
Each year the number of deaths goes higher and higher
There's something to do so we can put out this fire
I'm young myself but I know right from wrong
Some of you guys know what's up,
but you still choose to put a gun to someone's dome

-Maurice, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The great tragedy of course is that it's mostly young black men who keep killing our young black men, with the occasional child or senior citizen caught in the crossfire... and yes, "put out the fire" is exactly what we must do. Do you have ideas, for how we can make the situation better? How we can work together to make the word a better place?

Turn My Life Around

I would to anything to turn around
But while I try to smile what's under that is upside down
So what I do is think about the love of my life
Because when I get out I will be asking you to be my wife
You already know that you are the love of my life
Which brings me to my knees every night
All I can think is about you which makes me high as a kite
Which way should I turn, left or right?
I wish that I could change the hands of time
When I was holding you that's been on my mind
So what I did was not a big crime
Baby that's why they making me do a little time
I'll be home hopefully in February
And I promise that I won't be on the grind
Money that's not what's on my mind.
It's you that's on my mind.
I need to change my ways and that's what I'm working on
Just need a little help here and there
So if you wanna help that would be nice
Instead of you thinkin' I'm on the corner shooting dice
My mom told me she was going to get me a car with some sound
But that is not why I'm changing. I have a daughter now.
And that's why I have to turn my life around.

-Maurice, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's so inspiring to see you write, week in, week out, with so much love and determination and skill. Tell us, how do you intend to change your life? Because you have a new car? What will you study in school? What will you do when you want more money? What will you do when you want to go have fun instead of staying home changing diapers? Who is your support? Who is the father figure in your life? We believe you can realize your dreams, but we want to know you have a full strategy for how to do it.

Maybe

Maybe if I wasn't in this place
I wouldn't have this look on my face.
It's not right for me not to see you
But you already know that I love you
Just stay true to me
And baby you will see
What real love can be
Since I have been in here
I wished that you would be here
But not to stay just right there
So that I could look you in the face
To tell how much I love you
And hate to be in this place
Some day we'll see. Will they let me out?
Maybe

-Maurice, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We love reading all these poems about your girl, and reading this made us realy want to repeat our request from last week: would you write a poem that tells exactly what it was like on the day you first met? Was it at school, at the mall, through friends? Did you know she was the "one" right away? Use that poet's mind you have to tell The Beat about that very first day!

Love

Love is something that you don't play with
It's something you tell somebody and mean it from the heart
Like me and the mother of my child I loved her from the start
We had our little fights here and there
If you love somebody just let them know how you feel
Because you never know if he or she is real
So if you just get it off your chest
Instead of holding it in and looking depressed
Just take a deep breath
And let it go
By saying baby I love you
And hopefully she or he will say I love you too.
So what I do is pray to God every night.
To thank him for my love that I have in my life
That one day I will make her my life
We live together and we are sharp as a knife
So at night I look and ask above
Will he protect my love that is as soft as a dove
So this is not a push or shove, baby girl. It's love

-Maurice, 150 Crew

From The Beat: A wise man once wrote: Love isn't what you feel, love is what you do. So tell us, what do you think you should DO to be a good father and a good man to your new family. What kinds of things does your girl expect from you, and what do you expect from her?

Chillin' at the Beach

The beach is where you go kick it
Have fun and just enjoy the sun
The water the waves
The good lookin' babes
A place to get away from the ghetto
chill out and talk on yo' metro
Where I met the love of my life
Never thought I would be asking you to be my wife
Somewhere you have parties and all family stuff
See somebody you don't live and stuff
Too bad if they ain't tough
So they chill under the sun
Wish I could run around with my son but I have a daughter
But this place needs a volleyball net up, and someone to teach
That's why I love chillin' out at the beach.

-Maurice, 150 Crew

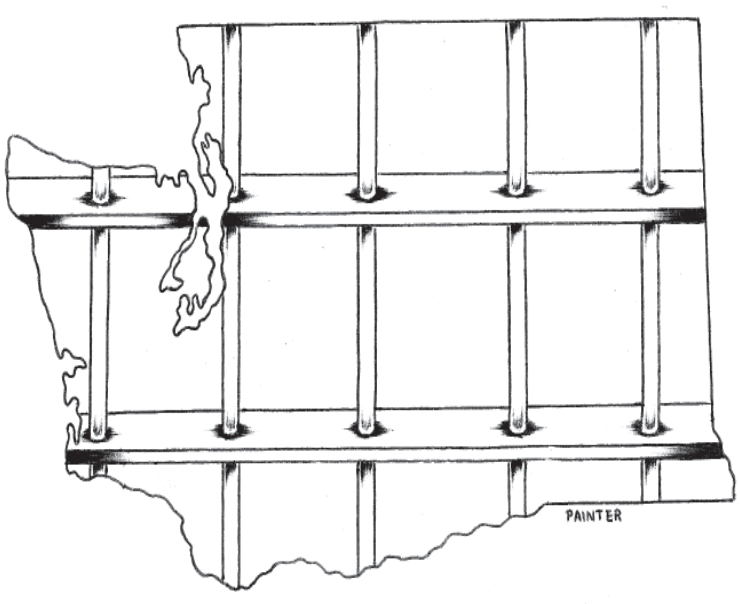
From The Beat: For all you know that little daughter of yours could be the next Flo Jo, or she could be a volleyball champion. Take her to the beach when you get out, and we guarantee you'll have just as much fun with her as with a son!

I Wish I Could Change Some Stuff In This World

as i sit in my room thinking
it feels like i'm in a ocean sinking
they are taking everything from me
keep yo' head up g-money
sitting here feeling alone
some day i'll be back home,
i'm sorry g-money, they won't do that again, never
you are my little cousin forever
c-y-a bound, sitting in maximum security
can't nobody change me but me
friends and cousins dying
mom crying
people lyin'
i don't know what to do
g-money we need to get our lives together, it's true
this world is getting crazy
twelve year old's having babies
sitting there thinking they are a grown-ass lady
these ninjas don't want you
they want the pearl
date you for a week
and then they are outta yo' world
you need a real man
somebody like me
i'm ready to settle down with that person who's special to me
god help us change it all
everyday we struggle not to fall
if you didn't know, my real name is merl
man i wish i can change some stuff in this world
much love to my lil' cousin g-money
keep yo head up and keep in touch
i love you man

-Lil' Jt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've written lots of love poetry for the pages of this 'zine, but this is the first time we've seen this kind of familial devotion that shares wisdom as a token of your highest esteem for one you've loved as family and whom you now see as reduced to the same pain you feel, betrayed by a game that promises fast and easy solutions but always leaves you with the consequences of losing whatever freedom and happiness you possessed in the outs. Now only a deeper wisdom and love can see you through and help you out — and that wisdom you share with G-Money for whom you so deeply care.



Dreams And Goals

My future is to make it into the NFL, but the only way that I can make it is by doing good in school, do my best on the sport, don't get seriously hurt, try to be the best on the team, an' make it into college.

But if I don't make it, I will try to be a mechanic, because I really like cars, and my dad used to fix cars, so I could learn about cars by him and then own my own business, if I get out of YGC.

-Boss Tycoon B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You know exactly what you must do to achieve your dream of the NFL, and that is to succeed first in school. And the best part is that you are realistic, so you know many people try for the NFL but few make it, so having a back-up plan is essential. By learning about auto mechanics, you've got both a dream and a goal, so we think you can do it. Now, maybe it's time to stop thinking of yourself as Boss Tycoon (no one we've ever seen locked behind walls looks much like a boss or a tycoon) and start thinking of yourself as Student Footballer...

The Way I Feel About You

the way i feel about you
is like love at first sight
i love the way you hold me in your arms
on rainy stormy nights
the way i feel about you
feels like i've known you all of my life
all the love and affection i have for you
i can't wait until i make you my wife
the way i feel about you
i'll take a bullet for you
i'll kill for you
whatever you want me to do
i'll do it just for you
only because i really do fulfill for you
and i hope you
do the same way i do
for me too
i don't only think of you as
my girl and i'm your man
but i think of you as my best friend
i think of you as my world's greatest queen
the way i feel about you
made me change my whole life around
i had a dream about meeting you in the town
you are the only one
that can bring my face to a smile from a frown
there's no girl that ever made me feel this way
that's exactly why no one
can ever ever take your place
the way i feel about you
i love you and always will love you
no matter what our differences are
or what we go through
because you will always be the one
with that key to my heart
even if we do break apart
but we will always be together
baby when i'm around you i get a chill
i was just letting you know how you make me feel

-Jt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Such testimony of love as only one who knows whereof the heart breaks and pieces itself back together, surviving the worst of stormy weather to greet eternity as lovers always promise love will be but few truly see — such is the testimony of love direct from the heart of JT, laid down in words printed in the pages of The Beat, for all the world to see and believe. Whatever prisons the powers that be, make for the physical limitations of a man's body, his heart has the power to always be free. And that is love's mystery, true love's history, as testified by JT.

Invisible Love

And love is invisible no one can see
Such a beautiful feeling
It's another half
Which makes two complete
Separate you from pain
From all the hate and heart
And summer rain
And we bare our souls like a naked body
That stands so weak
I'll look at my lover, soulmate from inside out
Yes my love we should finally be about
Nothin' but love
And our love should be invisible ...no one can see

-Lil' Mainy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Soulmate from the inside out. Another great line. When you write these poems, are they to a specific person, or are they to just the general idea of love?

Somebody

Somebody...
Please catch my tears from falling
Help me stand cause I'm crawling...
Blindly
Somebody...
Please find me...
'Cause I'm lost with myself
Tryna figure out my purpose of my heart that's self
Somebody...
Please...help
I need somebody who cares
I'm alone
It's been so long...way too long
By my side there's no one there
Somebody please...
Somebody

-Lil' Mainy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You are the somebody you seek. As this poem shows, it's the voice of the poet calling out - and you will never lose the companionship of paper and pen, not so long as you serve it the way you do.

Alone Inside

I know we can be emotionally alone inside
We gon' find that special someone to combine
Everything you have
Somebody is looking for the same
Whenever you do find, that someone please remain
People make mistakes don't let go
Forever is the name
Hold before letting go
Kiss until the passion grow
Until you know
That love is so
Ever complete
Somebody is feeling the same
Rather have rain
Instead of summer
Everything that they remember
Lovin' each other more and more
Acceptin' each other's past and helpin each other's future
For the best
Somebody feels what I'm sayin'
'Cause it's my hearts and it confess

-Lil' Mainy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Another wonderful poem about how love can bring people together. Keep 'em going, our prince of poetry!

The Beauty of a Woman

Look at the sun... never thought I would
Enjoy that sight
I guess you kept your promise
'Cause that's one beauty of a sunset, right?
Your shine reflect anything
Surrounded by love as water... and hate as storm
You became my everything... my good luck charm
We won't disagree
I understand you're the hell of heat when you're mad
But at night you're so sweet
In fact
The crack of dawn, you're so precious
Painting the lonely sky a beautiful art
And that lonely sky is my heart
Look at the sun,... never thought I'd enjoy
That sight again but I am because we always start to begin
The beauty of a woman

-Lil' Mainy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Love and hate fight for control over this poem and make it beautiful, just the way light and dark fight for the control of the sky twice a day, and when they do the colors all fire up beautiful. Keep that pen working.

'Till That Day

'Til the day I leave this dark place
'Til my shadow finally shows its face
Before I take my step to freedom
I must remember some
As my enemy become my help
My bra became my enemy
I look through my past to learn from my falls
Now I'll wish for freedom
Hope for more space
And to finally draw my
Options instead of trace
Till the day I leave this dark place
I'll realize the world I'll face

-Lil' Mainy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We love the creativity of that line about drawing instead of tracing. It's true, when you trace you're just copying someone else's pattern, when you draw, you're boldly mapping out your own future, you because the author of your own life. We look forward to seeing what you draw.

I look through my past to learn from my falls
Now I'll wish for freedom

I Just Want to Fly

I just want to fly
Take a girl wit' me and land in love until we die
Because just as she need in her heart, soul and eyes
I just want to share my love
Fly with her with a couple doves
Fit her heart perfectly
And love her purposely
I just want some girl to be there
Even when time would be the matter
Our love should share our heart there
I just want to fly there

-Lil' Mainy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is what they mean when they say that "hearts soar." When you are in love, you feel like you can do anything, even fly to the moon.

These Heartbeats

Adrenaline is the key
To whom I might be
So I'ma break it down like this
So you guys can see
Gettin' out of jail
now that's who I want to be
Get on wit' my life
And live it by all means
I'm in touch wit' the Lord now
Only He can take care of me
I hope my family can see
That I'm not goin' to die in the streets
Not as long as my heart beats
Want to go to school
And put my cleats on my feet
So I can show you what I'm going to be
I want a family one-day
So I can watch my children play
But I'm getting ahead of myself
Now I got to deal with today
It's a little after one and I still got another few days
Been here several months of my life
And now it's time to get out
God gave me another chance
So I'm goin' to step in and take this dance
'Cause nothin' gettin' in the way no more
I'm puttin' my feet out the door
And walkin' in the future
Saying no more, no more
Now it's time to let my heartbeats flow
As I feel no need to hit that 'dro no more
So I'm out
Peace
There's no need to wipe the dirt off my feet
'Cause I'm goin' to the streets
Preachin' the Lord within my heartbeats
Peace

-Ghost Face

From The Beat: We're glad that you've come to the realization that you need a change. It's not often we find someone who's genuinely tired of the same ol' same. How can you keep God in your life once you hit the streets where you not only have to worry about your spirit but also where to sleep and eat?

Only He can take care of me
I hope my family can see
That I'm not goin' to die
in the streets
Not as long as my heart beats

The Day

August 25th is the day, the day I'm getting out. That's the day I'll be free, the day I'll be back on the streets of Half Moon Bay. August 25th is the day, the day I'll be with my familia, finally all united.

-Silent

From The Beat: Good luck to you Silent. We hope that we won't have to see you again in the hall. Cherish your freedom and those that are around you.

I'm Thinking About You

I'm thinking about you
It's hard to forget
What we used to be
Hold hands
Matching shoes and a tank top
Special things that we shared
Now I'm saying sorry
But you don't care
I did everything you said
Remember our time to the movies
It was "When A Stranger Calls"
I fell asleep
You woke me up
And started macking wit' me
I know the reason why we left
So don't try to hide the feelings inside
Now I'm sitting in my room reminiscing
The day you left
Was cause I didn't have your permission
For something that wasn't of your interest

-Johnny

From the Beat: Heartbreaks are so hard to deal with, especially when you're doing time. Do you think it's beneficial to focus on getting her back? What about what you're going to do with yourself once you get out? How can you stay out of jail, so you can actually be there for your woman, whoever she might be?

Before Long

I come a knockin' at your door
But no one answers
So I creep and explore
I walk around back
And to my surprise
Something is open
So I crawl in and rise
Now I am alone
And my high is increasing
My body takes over
And my thoughts are ceasing
I take what I need
And I make for the door
The stuff is all ready
As I glide over the floor
A breath of fresh air
Brings my brain back reeling
I have accomplished nothing
But am full of bad feeling
Now my high is long gone
And I am craving another
Before long
I'll be robbing my mother

-The Grinch

From The Beat: How can you work on your addiction before it reaches a point where you're 'robbing your mother'? It's a sad thought, but we know all too well that for some this is reality. Do you think this time away from the streets is helping with your addiction or making it worse?

Now I'm sitting in my room reminiscing
The day you left
Was cause I didn't have your permission
For something that wasn't of your interest

Alcoholic.

Wake up in the morning
Thinking of drinking a 40 oz. of Mickey's
Always making me happy
In the bad and good times with my homies
Drinking a couple makes me feel good
But gets me in trouble with the people around me
Ending in a bad situation
The next day with a hangover
Making my head spin
Thinking what have I done
To the others and myself

-The Unknown

From The Beat: Does that mean that you are going to stop drinking? Maybe you should give it a thought since you know it is doing you no good. For sometimes we deal with situations by taking part in other things like drinking, but when all the liquor is gone those situations are still there for us to deal with. Just a little something to think about...

The One

I had a girl who I left for another girl, but then I wanted her back.
But it was too late. She wanted nothing with me!

-Esteban

From The Beat: You left her for some one else and now you want her back? Let's say if someone left you for someone else then they come back and want you back, would you be willing to go back with them?

Sometimes when I laugh
and joke
It's just to hide my
true feelings
Because I have not yet learned
How to express my feelings

Trash and Treasure

She thought you were nothing
To her you were trash
She threw you away
She thought you were helpless
Until I picked you up
You became my world
And my treasure
I wouldn't go anywhere
Without you
So I guess the saying is true
"One person's trash
Is another person's treasure."

-Phenomenal Woman

From The Beat: Have you ever had your 'trash' treasured by someone else? If so, what happened? Do you still treasure the person you're with? Did he agree to stay faithful to you while you did your time? Well, hopefully everything works out between the both of you because we'd hate to see your treasure become your trash.

Behind The Laughter

Behind the laughter
What do you see
Do you see the child
Always crying inside of me
Behind the laughter
What do you see
Do you see the child that's scared
To just let go and plead
Behind the laughter
What do you see
Do you see the young lady
That's just scared to be?
But let me ask you this
Behind all my laughter
What do you really see
Do you see me tryin' to be
Everything I can be at age fourteen
Tell me what you really see
Not just what you want to see
Inside of me

-Lil' Queens

From The Beat: Behind the laughter we see a very smart young lady who is striving to succeed in life. A young lady who has been through too much at a young age and who is strong, strong enough to lift herself back up and make something of her life. So this is what we see, do you see it? By the way, we also see how you're trying to sneak certain stuff in The Beat that you know isn't allowed. Please be more thoughtful next time... Thank you...

Love Each Other

You all have heard "hate your enemies"
But I tell you now "love your enemies"
Pray for those who hate you
And you will be true people
To your father in heaven
Also what that means
Is to be respectful to others
Even the ones you hate
And if you treat them with respect
You will get respect back
And mom and dad told me this
But I never got what they meant
5 years old all the way to 7 years old
But now I know what they meant
And I tell you now
Do not judge a book by its cover

-Brandon

From The Beat: You are right, do not judge a book by its cover because a really ugly book can hold a lot of knowledge inside. Speaking of which, in what ways does your 'cover' differ from what's inside? How are you judged? And who's the real you?

No Taking Back

I'm finna say something about the topic "one person's trash is another's treasure." It said something about if you've ever given up on loving someone, until you saw them loving someone else. Sometimes I wanna give this person up for certain reasons but then I stop and think positive for a second. Then I picture that if I did that it would be a big mistake, because if I saw them loving someone else that would just tear me apart.

So for now I ain't givin' nothing up. I'm happy with everything I do, have, decisions, and yea. I don't like to really take nothing back because I feel that if things happen they're for a reason. Or when they happen they were meant to happen. Whatever's done's done. Whatever's said is said. No taking back. I'm out.

-Nani

From The Beat: Yes, we understand that what's done is done, however that doesn't mean we can't look at the past, wonder where we went wrong, and learn from our mistakes, so we won't make them again in the future. What are some mistakes you keep making over and over again? Everybody has there own opinion and you're entitled to yours. As a matter of fact, we respect the courage it takes for you to voice that opinion.

Behind The Laughter

Sometimes when I laugh and joke
It's just to hide my true feelings
Because I have not yet learned
How to express my feelings
But I'm working on it
Dis ya' boy Dread Head
You know what it do

-Dread Head

From the Beat: You say you haven't yet learned how to express your feelings, but merely saying so is expression in itself. Does writing help you express your feelings? Have you ever missed out on an opportunity because you were laughing instead of showing your true feelings?

Another Day

Today is another day.
Another day locked up.
Another day not free.
I have been here for 40 days and 40 nights.
It may seem like 40 days, but it feels like 40 weeks.
8 more days to go.
It may seem like 8 days, but it feels like 8 weeks.
I have become a prisoner, a captive, of my own reckless intentions.
If there would have been another day to think things through,
There would have been another for me to be out.
Instead, I spend another day, after another day, after another day
Spending time for my crime,
When I should be on the outs enjoying the summertime.
I know I've made mistakes and taken the blame for everything.
I wish things were different, but they're not.
Although I spend another day feeling imprisoned inside of me,
I know there's another day to be free.

-No Name

From The Beat: Yes, and by the time this piece shows up in The Beat, you will be free and enjoying what is left of the summer. You speak wise, and you speak as though you have realized what you have done and want to make things different. We hope that is the case. So, what do you plan on doing when you hit the streets? (Besides enjoy summertime).

My Future

I want to get married and raise a family, which would make me feel like a man. I would feel proud and accomplished. I want to have three kids. I would let my kids go out a lot and all that, and wouldn't care too much if they get into trouble as long as they don't try to hide it from me.

Still, I wouldn't let them get into too much trouble. A suspension from school wouldn't bother me too much, but if they get locked up or expelled, I'd be angry and disappointed. I would want a good career for myself and for my children.

I think a good career must be enjoyable, fulfilling and unavoidable, and also well paying. When selecting the right career for myself, I would consider my own skills, talents, abilities and interests. I also find that important for a good future.

-Clarence

From the Beat: Wow, you really know what you want in life, huh? Will you be sharing your life experiences with your kids to prevent them from taking the wrong path? Would you raise your kids like the way your parents raised you or would you do it differently?

Spending time for my crime,
When I should be on the outs
enjoying the summertime.

Daría Cualquier Cosa

Daría cualquier cosa
Por estar a tu lado en este momento
Eres quien ocupa mis pensamientos
Desde la última vez que nos vimos
Extraño tu sonrisa
Extraño tu risa,
Extrano la tibieza de tus manos
Al tomarlas entre las mías.
Daría cualquier cosa por escuchar
El tono dulce de tu voz
Cuando pronuncias mi nombre
Daría cualquier cosa por tomarte
Entre mis brazos y susurrarte al oido
Una y otra vez
Cuanto te amo y te necesito
Dedicated to Smiley

From The Beat: ¿Y estas haciendo algo? ¿Que es lo que estas haciendo por estar a su lado? Si tanto quieres a esta persona, deberías de estar a su lado. Por esta vez publicaremos tus poemas de amor. Para el futuro, nosotros queremos algo que sea relacionado a los temas o relacionado a tu vida. Gracias!

I Would Give Anything

I would give anything
To be by your side at this moment
You are the one who occupies my thoughts
Ever since the last time we saw each other
I miss your smile
I miss your laughter
I miss the coolness of your hands
When I take them into mine
I would give anything to hear
The sweet tone of your voice
When you pronounce my name
I would give anything to take you
In between my arms
And whisper in your ear
Once and again
When I love you and I need you
Dedicated to Smiley.

-S

From The Beat: And are you doing something? What are you doing to be by his side? If you love this person so much, you should be by his side. Just for this one time, we will publish your love poem. For the future, we want something that is related to the topics or related to your life. Thanks!

One Man's Trash is Another Man's Treasure

What's up Beat, it's Lil' G. Well, I'm gonna write about this topic. It was like in 6th grade that I started going out with this girl. I treated her like I didn't care and I would ignore her sometimes. She showed me much love but I was on another height and I didn't even realize.

One day I was out drinking wit' some homeboys. I was like 12 I think. I was stealing bikes wit' my homies and she called me. I don't know what I was talkin' about but I told her that it was bad and I had to leave her. I broke up wit' her and we still grew up in da same hood. As she started hooking up with other people I starting thinking about her and I ain't gon' lie. I wanted her back.

Every time I seen her I would spit some game at her but she wasn't havin' it. She grow up, a keeper. I let her go like nothin'. I was a lil' 12 year old. If I would've stayed wit' her, she woulda still been by my side, but there's other girls in this world like fishes in the sea. I just moved on and I still talk to her. I would've kept it real wit' her too but it's bad.

Well, it's true that we don't realize what we had 'till we lost it. But u just got to move on and don't make the same mistake, feel me. Well, I got court August 8th. My PO is recommending camp. I'll sav it out, do it big on my home passes. Well it's all I got to say 'till next time. Later.

-Lil' Garcia

From The Beat: Yes, there are still many fish in the ocean but to find one that is right for you is hard. Take that experience as a lesson and learn from it. How will you appreciate the next one, if she ever comes along?

Yea, I lost a lot of "me" time but it was worth it. Being a mom is the best feeling you can ever have. I love my son so much and I would never go back in time to change it.

Government Understood

The government's understood
They do barely any good
And I don't think they would
If they could
'Cause to them
Crack was all good
Until it got into their own neighborhood
You see there's terrorists everywhere
And we really don't know what to do
People killin' one another
But for all we know
We could be killin' a brotha
A dear friend or even a lover
You see they say this government is democracy
It's really hypocrisy
They mold us like pottery
Take over our property
And put us in poverty
The government tries to slaughter me
And raffle my limbs off like lottery
You see it's not the way it ought to be

-Jesse

From The Beat: It's a tragedy that someone who could put together words so magically is sitting where you sit. You've got a mature outlook on the world and some of its politics. What could the government do to make things better? Matter of fact, we have a good idea; write the president a letter.

My Life As A Mom

Damn. It's early in the morning. Got to get up, change a diaper and make a bottle. He doesn't want to go back to sleep so I got to stay awake.

Now it's six o'clock, time to get ready for school, which I don't got a lot of time to do 'cause Lamar's crying. I go to school, drop him off at my school day care and get to class. School's out. Now I got to pick him up and go home.

I get home and he falls asleep in my arms. So I put him in my bed with me and sleep with him. I wake up 'cause I hear him moving. He looks at me and gives me a big smile. I get up to give him a bath. We play for a couple hours. Then 9:30 pm is when he goes to sleep.

Yea, I lost a lot of "me" time but it was worth it. Being a mom is the best feeling you can ever have. I love my son so much and I would never go back in time to change it. Watching him grow up is the best thing I've ever seen. I'm not gonna front like it's easy, cause it isn't. It is very hard especially 'cause I'm only sixteen. But I know I can get through it. I don't let people bring me down 'cause it's not worth it. But I wanted to let you guys get a sneak peak at what I go through everyday as a single teen mom.

-A Young Mom

From The Beat: Being a parent is hard — especially being a single mother at 16 and raising a child. However, we know you are determined and a very strong young lady. We have a feeling that the love you have for your son is enough to keep you going. What would you say to another teenage girl who had thoughts of having a baby? Do you support the idea of teenage girls having babies? We want to know you're take since you've probably got the most enlightening perspective.

Una Entrevista Entre Amigas

La Gorda: Estoy aqui acordandome de mi pasado.
La Dreamer: Simon, ¿te acuerdas cuando vivíamos juntas?
G: Orale, la neta sino fuera por ti quien sabe donde estubiera.
D: ¿Pues para que son las homitas? Yo te hago paros y tu no me debes nada. Todo viene de mi corazón. True homegirl love, que no?
G: Tú siempre estas en mi corazón por vida homegirl y nunca quedas atras.
D: Orale esta firme Gorda. Lees mi mente todas las veces. Tú eres primero y nunca queda atras.
G: Orale espero que las carnalas sepan que es lo que es el verdadero amor que yo tengo por ti. Mantengas sus cabezas.

From The Beat: De la misma manera como se hablan en estos momentos, esperamos que de esa misma manera se ayuden en mantenerse afuera de las carceles cuando esten efuera. ¿Creen que puedan hacer esto por ustedes mismas? Les deseamos lo mejor a ustedes.

An Interview Between Friends

La Gorda: I'm here, reminiscing on my past.
La Dreamer: Right, do you remember when we used to live together?
G: Yeah, the truth is, if it weren't for you, who knows where I would be.
D: Well, what are your homegirls for? I do favors for you and you don't owe me anything. Everything comes from my heart. True homegirl love, right?
G: You are always in my heart for life, homegirl, and you are never left back.
D: All right, it's all good, Gorda. You read my mind all the time. You are number one and you are never left back.
G: All right then, I hope that sisters know the true love that I have for you. Keep your heads up high.

-Dreamer And Gorda

From The Beat: The same way both of you are talking to each other right now, is the same way we hope you two help each other out to maintain yourselves way from jails when you two are back on the outs. Do you two believe you can do this for each other? We wish both of you the best of luck.

Me Reí Con Dolor

La verdad si he tenido que reirme para que los demás digan, "este vato es fuera," pero la verdad no es así.

Hace tiempo estaba peliando con mi morra en la Mission porque ella me miro con otra morra. Me reclamó con voz recia y le dije que se fuera al diablo, que no la quería ver y me reí adelante de la otra morras. La verdad es que reía con dolor de haberle hecho eso. Solo lo hice para que dijeria la otra morra que este vato le vale madre.

From The Beat: Aveces nosotros hacemos cosas por la cual despues nos arrepentimos. Lo que hiciestes tubo demaciado mal. Lo mejor que pudistes hacer era asumir las consecuencias de tus actos. Lo que hicistes fue pura cobardia. Al fin terminastes sin ninguna de las dos, y la que más te quería, fue a la quien hicistes sentir mal. ¿Te has disculpado con ella?

I Laughed With Pain

The truth is, yes, I have had to laugh so others could say, "This dude doesn't care," but the truth is, it's not like that.

A while ago, I was fighting with my girlfriend on Mission because she saw me with another female. She scowled me with a harsh tone and I told him to kick rocks, that I didn't want to see her, and I laughed in front of the other females. The truth is, I was laughing with pain for having done this to her. I only did it so the other girl could say this dude doesn't give a damn.

-Franklin B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Sometimes we do things which we later one regret doing. What you did was very bad. The best thing you could have done was taken responsibility for your actions. What you did was purely cowardly. In the end, you ended up without any of the girls, and the one that loved you the most is the one that you made feel bad. Have you asked for forgiveness from her?

I felt stupid, knowing that my best friend had betrayed me, and also someone whom I loved from the bottom of my heart. That's why now you can't have trust for anyone, not even your best friend.

Me Traiccionaron

Una vez deje de amar a alguién la cual estaba amando a otra persona. Yo deje de amar a mi novia, a la cual yo le llamaba novia porque sentia amor y cariño por ella. Yo salía con ella al parque. Cuando salía con ella, me sentía feliz como nunca.

Ella también me decía que me quería y que sentía algo por mí, entonces yo también le dije que la amaba. Teníamos un año de andar de novio. Un día me prometio que ibamos a salir, entonces le dije que estaba bien, que ibamos ir al parque todos los días. Yo le decía que la amaba hasta que un día la vi que iba agarrada de la mano con mi amigo. Ella no me había visto. Cuando yo le dije, tienes otro novio verdad. El dijo, "no te preocupes amigo, nomas venimos platicando como vamos a la misma escuela." Le dije, "siento algo por ti, lo siento, que te vaya bine y que seas feliz.

Me sentia estupido al saber que mi mejor amigo me había traicionado y también alguién que yo quería de corazón. Por eso ahora no hay que tenerle confianza ni a tu mejor amigo. Así fue como deje de querer a alguién.

From The Beat: Fue lo mejor que pudistes hacer. Lo bueno fue que tomastes las cosas con madurez y pudistes terminar la relación sin tener que usar la violencia. Ella no se merece tu amor ni el tu amistad. Lo que deberías de hacer para la próxima es conocer bien a las personas que le das tu confianza. Solo porque esto te pasó, no quiere decir que vas a pensar que todo el mundo actua de la misma manera. No todas las personas en este mundo son las mismas.

They Betrayed Me

One time, I stopped loving someone who was messing with another person. I stopped loving my girlfriend, who I called my girlfriend because I felt love and affection for her. I would go out with her to the park. Whenever I went out with her, I felt happy like I had never before.

She would also tell me that she loved me and that she felt something for me, so I told her I loved her, too. We were boyfriend and girlfriend for a year. One day, she promised me that we were going to go out, so I told her it was all right that we were going to go to the park everyday. I would tell her that I loved her until one day I saw her walking hand-in-hand with my friend. She had not seen me. When I told her, "You have another boyfriend, right?" She told me, "Don't worry about it friend, we were just talking like we do when we go to school." I told her, "I feel something for you. I regret this happening, but good luck to you and I hope you're happy.

I felt stupid, knowing that my best friend had betrayed me, and also someone whom I loved from the bottom of my heart. That's why now you can't have trust for anyone, not even your best friend. That's how I ended up no longer loving someone.

-Elvin B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: That was the best thing you could have done. The good thing was that you took things with maturity and you were able to finish your relationship without having to use violence. She doesn't deserve your love or your friendship. What you should do for next time is get to know very well the people whom you give your trust to. Just because this happened, doesn't necessarily mean that you're going to think that the whole world acts the same way. Not everyone in this world acts the same way.

Man Up

What's up wit' it Beat. The thing for me is being locked up in the hall. I was stressing at first and I was tripping about my girl and my moms, but one thing that made me not trip was when one of the staff told me to "man up" and I thought about it and I was like, alright "fo sure' fo sure." So when I got out I'm gonna handle my business and do what I got to do to make my life better. But what I got to say to everybody is to man up and to learn from their mistakes.

-Joshie Boi

From The Beat: It's crazy how even in the darkest time – hurting on lockdown, thinking about your loved ones, a person suddenly find a good thing to put their hopes on...in this case, straight from the mouth of a counselor. It's like a challenge came out to the man in you, and and the man inside of you stood up to meet that challenge. What does "manning up" mean to you? What kinds of changes do you feel you have to make?

My Go-Cart

What up Beat? I'm going to tell ya'll my biggest disappointment. My biggest disappointment when I was riding my go-cart and I had fallen off it and it broke.

-Lil' Grine

From The Beat: Well, if that's your biggest disappointment, you should probably set higher goals for yourself. We suggest you take a good look at your self! How's school? How's juvenile hall treating you? What about when you get out? How's your relationship with your blood family?

Chaka's Update

C'mon this is Chaka from Hayward.

Well all I want to say is that I have court soon to see what they're going to do with me, like in a few months I'm going to be 18 years old so I just got to see what they say to me. Well I'm out but remember stay sucker free 24/7 one love, all rato.

-Chaka

From The Beat: You are one of our oldest and favorite familiar faces in The Hall. We are always happy to see your smile each week. But it also makes us unhappy, because you should be out there living a good life, instead of bouncing back and forth from camp to placement to the streets to the unit — and now you're coming on 18 and the stakes are different. We know that your religious work is something that gives you strength, but then we had to cut your piece down by half because of all your gang references. Do you believe that God and the gang lifestyle can ever go together?

Hate

I hate many people I don't know. Because I hate Fifty Cent in the movie," Get Rich or Die Trying." I think the movie was lying. It be a lot of people talking behind walls but don't let funk come out.

-Lil' Cheech

From the Beat: How is it possible to hate someone you don't know? That would be like someone judging you before they know you. Do you think that that's coo'?

Hate

If someone do somethin' you hate, it can make you hate that person. Or if someone kill someone in your family, it can make you hate that person that you never met.

-David

From The Beat: Has anything like this ever happened to you, where you hated you didn't know because of what they'd done to you? Or even vice versa, where you were hated on by a person you'd never met?

To New York

When I get older, I want to move to New York or to town and just live happily ever after with no kids, just me.

-Aone

From The Beat: New York is an amazing city. The buildings reach higher than you can imagine, and there's something to watch on every street corner. But you know what they say "no matter where you go, there you are." What would you need to live happily, there or here? And what was it that made you decide you didn't want kids?

This Paragraph

In this paragraph, I am going to be writing about one of my biggest disappointments in my life.

One thing that was very disappointing was when I went to court at juvenile hall for a frame. They said I had robbed an old lady but really I was watching her get robbed. The police said I robbed her because I was at the crime scene. So, I had to be in the Hall for a few days, then I went to court thinking I was going to get out, but, I got detained. Now I'm sitting her waiting until my next court day which is tomorrow, I hope I get out.

-Derrick

From The Beat: Derrick, how was that a frame? You were present at the time of a crime being committed. Did you just stand there and watch this take place? Did you know the robbers? Be careful, the company you keep, may get you into more trouble than you would like.

My Temporary Release (TR)

What up, Beat! This Soldier from Hayward, comin' at you from Camp. Man, this place is easy. All we do is rec' all day! This program is cool.

Today I went and seen the outside world. I got a temporary release (TR). My grandma and my lil' sis' and my baby'mama came. Man, that felt coo'! I ain't seen them in a min'. I honestly didn't want to come back, but the program is too easy to mess it up. So, I'm'a pimp this!

I had a coo' time today — the fresh air and all that. Well, I'm'a be out for now. I just wanted to tell you what's been goin' on. Stay up, be safe, to all the homies. Late.

-Lil' Soldier

From The Beat: Congrats on doing a good program and getting that TR and seeing family and freedom for a day. Now if you can carry this do-right attitude out with you when you've finished the program, you'll never be incarcerated again. But don't just pimp your time here, use it — participate in sports, do schoolwork, volunteer for work, 'cause it not only helps the time pass more quickly, it can prepare you to be productive after your release.

Disappointment Turns Into A Plus

My biggest disappointment in life is coming to Juvenile Hall. I made a bad decision and ended up in the Hall. I think it's a good thing that I got locked up, because I am going to Boys' Republic.

Boys' Republic is a program that hooks you up with skills, so you can get a job. If I was still on the outs I didn't think I would have got a job.

The only thing I regret is cutting my dreads.

-Mayonnaise

From The Beat: Each week you write about missing your dreads, and we can see why you would. On the other hand, we admire you for doing it, because it's like a visual symbol of you making a decision of a short-term sacrifice (hair always grows back) to that long-term goal. You're using the system, and your sentencing, to get job skills so you can come out on top in the end! After everything you've been through – you've seen a "ticket out" like in our last question, and it looks like you're going to take it. Keep writing to us from ROP, Mayonnaise, and don't let the bad "ketchup" with you (crash boom).

What Up Beat?

For the past week I been mad stressing 'cause my cousin got killed by the police. But, I'm even madder because I'm here, in the Hall and I couldn't even see him for the last time.

We used to smoke together, fight and go to parties. When we did go, he used to always have my back no matter what I did or was about to do. He always had my back, so I feel like I lost hope. I could control myself.

I already didn't like the police, but now I hate the police. So, I hope I still have the little respect I had for the police when I get out. RIP Ron B, I miss you.

-Lil' Phat

From The Beat: We are sorry to hear about your cousin. Try to understand that there are some good cops, some bad cops. Just like you are different from all your peers. Try to treat everyone with respect, first. Be careful – when you walk around with a chip on your shoulder, the only one you are weighing down is yourself. RIP Ron B. In the name of Ron, change your ways!

What's Up Beat?

I've been cool in this place, just maintaining, waitin' to get my Camp interview. I'm hella mad because my Birthday is tomorrow on the 9th and I'm going be spending it in here. But, it's cool 'cause I'm going to camp for six to nine months.

When I get my first weekend pass I'm going to celebrate my Birthday. But, they need to hurry up and interview me so they could come and get me. The sooner I go to Camp, the sooner I will get my weekend passes. I gotta do three weeks there before I get my weekend passes, so I'm trying to get there because I don't got no more court dates so I'm just in here waiting for them.

My brother's coming from the Pen in June and I'm-a be out in February, so as long as I'm out when he gets out, it's cool.

When he gets out, he's all I'm messin' with, me and big bra.

-Roland

From The Beat: Roland. How's your brother doing? Have you been in touch with him? You obviously miss him, but will he be a good influence when he gets out. Perhaps the two of you will need each other, to keep yourselves out of trouble. Happy Birthday.

Where Have You Been and Where Are You Going

Man I've been on the block getting money. ... I am going to have all the power you feel me that's all y'all need to know.

-Baby Lou

From The Beat: On the block getting money? Come now Baby Lou, The unit you sit and sleep in is no block. We worry about you when you talk this way, because we want to imagine you working towards your future, and there's no future in street life. Tell us something that will give us some hope!

I Can Hate

What's up Beat? Yeah, I can hate a lot of people I don't know. Actually, I do hate a lot of people I don't know. Living the life, you have a lot of enemies.

-Angelo

From the Beat: What kind of life are you living when you have a lot of enemies? Isn't there another way to live life? Hating on other people affects you more than others.

Can You Hate Someone You Don't Know?

You can't hate someone you don't know, because you don't know anything about them and you don't know what type of things that they do. So, you shouldn't talk bad about people you don't know because you don't know what they will do to you for talking bad about them.

So, that's not respectful to talk bad about someone you don't know, or to hate on someone you don't know because whether you know it or not, it will come back to you the same way you hated on someone. The next person will hate on you, so think about it. Talking bad about someone you don't know or hating someone you don't know.

-James

From The Beat: That's a good point James. Plus, it just makes you look bad when you talk about people. Just like many great mother's have always said, " If you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all".

Another Day In The Hall

As days go by the time in the Hall goes by faster as you get use to being locked up. I just keep thinking about what I would be doin' if I was on the outs. It really ain't no telling. I'd probably be somewhere with hella females or sittin' back chillin' on the block with the homies.

But just thinking about the outs keep you thinking about your next court date or you release date. I ain't really tripping; I should be out in no time.

But to everybody locked up, friends or enemies keep yo' head up 'till yo' day you get that release.

-Fed-Up Beam

From The Beat: Time in the Hall is very stressful. Think about what kind of behavior brought you to the Hall. When you do get your release, you will have the power to determine if you will stay on the Outs. Maybe chillin on the block is what got you in trouble in the first place. Anyhow, think about your behavior and do what you got to do – to stay out of trouble.

RIP Emmit

it your boy baby cash
first off r i p emmit
isaac you ninja missing you
y'all know we back in it
we in the house
to all you ninjas that say
y'all know my cousin emmit
forget y'all one love

-Baby Cash

From The Beat: Anyone who knew Emmit or knew of him, has the right to mourn him. Don't reduce a human being you knew, loved, and still love(!) — to a turf call. If that's what you mean to criticize others for doing, trying to raise their street status thereby, say so.

Hate

i can't hate no one i don't know
because i don't know how he act
and i just don't know him
but i know someone i hate
that is the police
because they would mess with you
for no reason
and that is who i hate
i don't know all of them
but i hate them

-Demetrus

From The Beat: So, you're saying that you do hate people you don't know, if they wear a police uniform. If everyone thinks like you, then that makes it pretty hard on a good cop, don't you think? And since hate creates hate, it perpetuates ill will.

Hate How They Act

Yes, you can hate someone that you don't know. You can see a person and not like him, just by his presence and how he presents himself and how he acts.

-John Doe Juggalo

From The Beat: Can you hate how a person acts without hating the person? Frankly, at The Beat, it's commonplace to do so.

The Thoughtful Tangle

I been to the mall
I been to the fall
But at the end of it all
I been to the Hall
Wasn't strapped
With my piece
Was on a feast
Then all my anger
Got on a release
Now I'm locked up
Might not get out
In a minute
But a lot to think about
When I'm up in it
When I get out
I'm to the studio
not the Pen
And throw a grin at it
Might be fat
But I know it's gon' be a clean rap.

-Lil Cheech

From the Beat: Nice poem. Sounds like you got a plan to make some music, handle that and maybe that will help keep you focused on staying out. Keep up the good work.

Wake Up

wake trav up
from the hell in the cell
mo' love or no love
like a sycamore tree
wake me from this dream
this crazy, crazy dream
where art is life and life is pain
and pain is when you scream
i walk these aisles by myself
i'm gonna walk myself to death
moving along like a slug
in a world too fast for me
leaving a trail of blood and glass
that slime of a past
dragging it all behind me

-Choyce

From The Beat: Some of this is definitely you, and some came from we don't know whom — but altogether it speaks of the gloom you feel in your locked room, stuck like chuck with a past attached like a chain and a future that threatens even more pain.

Can You Hate Someone That You Don't Know?

Once again, what it do Beat? This ya' boy Freddie. Yeah, I can hate someone that I don't like, but I try not to because hate is a bad thing and I won't want someone to hate me because if someone hate me that means that they would do anything to harm you so what I am trying to say is, that you shouldn't hate people because it ain't right and keep your head up. Peace!!

-Freddie

From the Beat: You shouldn't hate people you don't know, but it sounds like you know what's up. Utilize your knowledge and lead others in the right direction.

Where Have I Been, Where I Going

I've been to Vegas, New York, Texas, Florida, Reno, and San Diego. Now I'm going to Los Angeles. I'm leaving Juvenile Hall next month; I will be able to change my life around.

I think going to Los Angeles is a really good idea. Because if I stay in Oakland I will just keep doing the things I do, like robbing people, stealing cars, playing with guns, selling drugs to peoples parents—this is why I am glad I'm leaving Oakland.

In Los Angeles I'll get to go back to school and get a job. A job working with animals.

-Baby Dominique

From The Beat: Dominique, do you think that all your problems exist only in Oakland? Los Angeles may provide a fresh start, but your behavior will determine if you will change your life around. Be good Dominique. You'll see, if you can control your anger at your new home, you experience there will be much better. Good luck – we'll miss you.

Derrick

This ya' boy Derrick, coming solid. Bra, I have been through sweet and rough times. I have had times where me and my mom had to worry where we were going to sleep at night.

Now, that was rough, but we have had sweet times where we have so much money not knowing what to do with it. And now mom is on her feet and owns two homes and is in real estate.

During the rough times, I felt bad. But when the sweet times came, I felt good and the heavy burden I had been carrying for so long was gone. It has made me to a great person today.

-Derrick

From The Beat: Derrick, you are a wonderful person, which means: To maintain your greatness, you must make great decisions, get great results and excel at everything you do, making you the greatest!

Biggest Disappointment

The worst thing that ever happened to me is when my momma died. Can't nuttin' be worst than that, straight up.

She had a lot of unfinished business, so it's my job to finish it for her. Get that first house she always wanted; get that car she wanted, etc. I'm-a live my life for her, act like she here, even though she ain't.

-Tay

From the Beat: Sorry to hear about your loss. It's good you got a lot of motivation in your life though. Stick with your plan and make your mom proud. That's a beautiful thing, Tay.

My Three Decisions

What's up with y'all out there? This yo' boy Jamar, still in here. I went to court on August 7, they gave me three choices: CYA 18 months, ROP 18 months or stay in Juvenile Hall to my 18th birthday in December, then go to Rita for 12 months.

I picked ROP. They wasn't trying to show me no love. I'm solid through it. I just did five months at camp, and then I got out for two months -- now 18 months in ROP!

My son turned one in mid-August, my other daughter 's birthday is on November 8 and my other daughter's is on December 3.

It's messed up that I got to do this time -- I'm going to get this shhh over with, I'm tired of coming to jail when I get out ROP.

By the time they come get me it will be November. Then I gon' start my program, when I get out all my kids going to be turning three, but it's cool.

RIP JayJay, Davon, Nene, Greedy

-Lil' Jamar

From The Beat: You've been through the system's circles so many times it must make you feel dizzy – but now here you are, a father with all these young children waiting on your love and support. ROP may not be a great place to be, but they do good job training. In the end it might be a great place to go to get job help and emotional support to help you be the best father you can be. What do you think? Is there silver lining attached to this lockdown cloud?

Haters Everywhere

Can you hate someone you don't know? I would have to say, yes, you can hate someone you don't know.

It happens everyday in life. There are haters everywhere you go, all in the streets. If you shine hard, and someone (else) struggling, they be like, "Forget that dude!" — just 'cause he eatin' but workin' hard for what he got in whatever he doing, selling drugs or getting a paycheck.

The Beat question asks if there are people who don't like me that don't know me — the answer is: yes, in everyday activity! But I let that slide off my back 'cause I don't let that get to my head. I'm from Oakland, and if you let little talk get to yo' head, you ain't real, to me, 'cause if someone say something to me that b-s., I'm say, "I'm on the clock, money fallen out my pockets — so I got to chase it!" Don't hate. Get yours. I'm'a get mine!

-Arthur

From The Beat: If you really want to get your money and keep it, or keep getting it without these extended forced "vacations" locked up (which only get longer as you get older, you feel) — then you need to distinguish between "selling drugs or getting a paycheck." Yeah, both ways of working for your money may attract haters who are jealous of you, but one way you stay free on a road that leads to prosperity and family, while the other road leads to a penitentiary or cemetery, whichever comes first. Look at the pants you're wearing now — don't even have pockets!

Camp

What's up, Beat? It's me again. Well, I'm at Camp now. Took them hella long to pick me up from the Hall!

But anyways, I'm here now and been here for a week — and it's hella fun up here! It's more free. I be outside all day; and I got some homies up here; and time goes by fast! Well, got to go.

-Tub

From The Beat: It's great to hear that someone sees how good he has it at Camp, 'cause so many just stay complaining, making trouble for themselves with their own negative attitude. It's coo' to have homies, but make sure they don't lead you to trouble.

This Poem Wants

this poem wants success in its life
this poem wants an education
this poem loves money
this poem is stressed
because the poem that made this poem
is sad 'cause this poem is in here

-Lil' Jay

From The Beat: If the poet and the poem are one, then the poet's work is never done. Self-made, the poem will always say, "Don't leave me here stuck on this page! Take me away! Take me away!"

This Hate

What's up, Beat? What's crackin'? This is Sasquatch, from Hayward. I want to send my respect to all who respect me. Now down to business: Well, in my situation, I shouldn't hate nobody I don't know — but I do.

I'm a gang banger. I hate my rival gang members. Those are the only people I hate that I don't know. Well, I'm 'bout to cut this short. I don't really like writing today. Till next time.

-Sasquatch

From The Beat: You have this "objective" mind that allows you to think things like, "I shouldn't hate nobody I don't know," but then you reject it 'cause you're a gang banger — and that's just who you are and how you feel. Well, we think you're more than that, and when you're ready to admit it to yourself, you'll still be you, but you won't have to act a foo' just 'cause that's what gang bangers do.

When I Put My Mind On It

I can go anywhere because I think. When I put my mind on it, I can do it! If I wanna go to Brazil, I can do it. All I have to do, is put my mind on it.

-John Doe Juggalo

From The Beat: If by "putting your mind on it" mean committing yourself to a workable plan and following through with patience and determination — yeah, you can!

Dreams That I Have

The dream that I have, is that one day I can do good in life. But at the same time, I'm starting to make that dream into a reality. See, about a week ago, I found out that my lil' bro' is trying to be like me — and I told him that it's not a good life to live!

There are a lot of people who will pretend to be your friends, and at the same time they will set you up! 'Cause life is no joke. Ask anybody. All I know is that the life I live is not for me anymore. I mean, it was fun at first, but doing the same thing everyday, it gets kinda boring after awhile. Right now I'm trying to get away from that life and be a good role model for my lil' bro' and my lil' sisters. Till next time, late — and Fairlas is out.

-Fairlas

From The Beat: Wow! It takes guts to make a choice like this, especially when you're surrounded by all these fools who keep bumping their gums about what big shot-callers they all are in the outs, big ballers big pimpin', hardcore G's and down vatos. And the truth is just as you say, same old same old, day after day, till they get so bored they doing something stupid, thinking it proves how true and bold they are, but all it is, is fighting the dead-end boredom of getting high and drunk on the spot everyday. Thank God you have a little brother out there to motivate you to take a clear look at your life, and thank God your lil' bro' has an older brother with the courage to change his ways before it's too late.

Life In Fairfield

The Fairfield life is cool, because it's mi varrio ("my hood"). But, yeah, like I was saying, it can get rough, too, at times. I mean, I lost some good friends I know — but that's life, and their names will live on and on.

I really do miss my home, Fairfield, a lot, and I will be going back soon. But for right now, I got to stay at Camp Sweeney, for a few more months. Then I'm gone!

All I can say to you is: Don't ever forget where you're from, rep your hood to the fullest and live your life to the fullest, too. But for now, just live your life and not anybody else's. Okay, Fairlas is out.

-Fairlas

From The Beat: When you lose friends to the street life of the varrio, or gang rivalry in Fairfield, it's is not acceptable to say "that's life" and claim immortality for your friends' names. You can't bring back the dead, but you don't have to participate in the human slaughter that is part and parcel of the life style you are celebrating here. That is not living life to the fullest, but just the opposite — spreading death and cutting life short, not to mention destroying the quality of life for the survivors who have only jails, hospitals and death to look forward to when they could have good jobs and loving families in their future. If you want to rep your varrio, do it by showing a better way to live your life, for your own sake and the sake of the youngsters coming up. No one's saying not to be you, but look at what you choose to do.

Missing The Reunion

My biggest disappointment in life was about a year ago when I missed my last family reunion because I did some stupid stuff and ended up in juvi.

-Anthony

From The Beat: We know it's hard not to be mad at yourself when you know you have messed up. But there will be other family reunions so do it right next time and be sure not to miss the next one.

Hate and Disrespect

You could hate someone you don't know, and you can tell by the way they look at you! Or, if they do something that is disrespecting you. You could see that he ain't gon' be cool with you.

Or he could just act a certain way that you don't like, and you ain't gon' show respect for that person. Like for the gang members, if someone sees a rival gang member, he gon' disrespect him 'cause of what he claims, and he don't even know him. So you could hate someone you don't know.

-Arturo

From The Beat: It's like some people, gang members for example, begin with the hate, and any person that fits the profile will do. So, how is this different from racism or any other prejudiced hate? Also, we're not asking can one — but can you, Arturo?

My Own Thing

i been all over the place
seen a lot of places
funny faces
i be on my own
and doin' my own thing

-Rubber Gloves

From The Beat: Strange nom de plume. Maybe we don't want to think too hard about where you've been with a name like that! But on the real, it's sad when a youngster has to be on his own, trying to act like he's grown, when he should be safe, protected, loved and supported at home.

Chillin' At Camp Sweeney

i'm just chillin' at camp sweeney
doing my program
my program is six to nine months
and i'm on my third month
i can't wait to go home

-Jim

From The Beat: Sounds like you're doing coo'. Just make sure when you do get released, you don't go back to playing the foo'.

I Hate People That ...

Yes, you can hate someone you don't know. For example, I hate people that act like they got money, or hella females — like someone really gives a what! Basically, I hate everyone that be tryin' to show off, that talk 'bout what they got in the outs.

I also hate those people that change once they come into these institutes, that act hard in the outs but once they get behind these walls, they cry themselves to sleep — and grab a Bible, and try to show people they have changed their ways. Then they come out and talk 'bout how they handled theirs and was hella solid.

-Karlitos

From The Beat: Those that are all about change in here and then on the outs go right back to their old ways are to be pitied, not hated — but we can understand your irritation at such self-deception. On the other hand, real tears of remorse and a real commitment to change are to be applauded, 'cause when it comes to doing wrong, staying "hella solid" is as self-deluded as it is "strong" — you'll never be as solid at all, as a penitentiary wall!

On Hate

Hate is jealousy — but not necessarily because somebody got a bigger plate than you do and your stomach's growling. You might need to go fill your stomach.

Or, you can just plain hate — because he could be weaving through traffic faster than you are. So you cause corruption. That's how most people get they' block knocked off, because they jealous and hatin'.

-Kudah Black

From The Beat: If we were writing a thug dictionary, written for and by thugs, you'd have just written the entry for "hate".

RIP Ron Ron, In Loving Memories

Brah, you gone man! I don't know what to do. You know I don't mess with nobody but you my ninja! And you already know how the squad feel about your being gone.

We will always miss you forever. You will always be remembered in our hearts as the one still standing strong. We love you my one-and-only brah. You was my everything — my right hand man, my female, my lover! My everything to me! When I didn't know what to do, you told me. [To be continued.]

-Leon

From The Beat: You need to understand that Ron Ron has died and gone to heaven, and when that happens, the grossness of error in his thinking was burned away by the heat of coming closer to God. Now his spirit speaks to you in dreams, and in your imagination if you listen closely, but he's telling you everything is not as it seemed. You don't need to die as he did. Listen when the world grows silent and you'll hear his voice telling you that he wants you to live — and to do that, "You have to change, mayne. Don't go on just the same, looking for someone else to blame."

What's The Difference Between Me And Them?

Me personally, I hate a lot of people I don't know. I play a game that brings a lot of enemies that I don't know my way. I'm still there for my bro. Like the war we are fighting - the U.S don't know anybody they're killing in the Middle East. They call them soldiers and for them, it's good what they're doing out there. How much difference is there?

-Lil' Gumby

From The Beat: We think you are wasting your time and energy on the game. No one should have to live life looking over their shoulder, especially someone so young and should be focusing on far more important things. Yet we have to admit that you make some very compelling points at the end of your piece. It really makes you take a step back and think about how we divide people up into good guys and bad guys. You obviously are smart cat so why are you also wasting your brain?

Camp Life

it's looking good up here
we living free mang
i'm about to get out soon too
all i got to say is take it easy on yourself
and keep your heads up at all times

-Tony

From The Beat: Sounds like you're seeing things clearly, but it depends on what you mean by taking it easy on yourself. Sounds like you mean, don't run — do a good program and walk away with no warrant on your back. And it sounds like you mean, don't go back to the life style that keeps bringing you back to lock up, 'cause it will have you feeling messed up and stressed out.

What It Do

What's crackalackin' wit the "gente". First let me introduce myself. It's Lil'

Krazy from Hayward. Most of y'all know the get-down on what's crackin' with me. I'm just postin' wit the "family" and the other "carnals".

I got two more weeks until I go to court and get released. I just gotta be coo'. Feel me? I been here a lil' over five months, and that ain't nothin' compared to my homies, or other people that are gettin' years and years. But it's good though, that I'm gettin' out. I'ma do it live! I got females, purp', Henny, and family to attend to. And I'ma try to get a job.

But that's all I got. So I'ma end this in full fashion and extend my greetings to those up at Camp, be safe. I'll see up you soon on the outs. But that's it for now, and I'm out. Alrato. "RIP to all the fallen in the game."

-Lil Krazy

From The Beat: You've got to do more than "try" to get a job. You've got to get a job, no matter what. Now you may say that it's not up to you, but it is. If you refuse to quit, refuse to take no as an answer, but keep on pushing everyday in every way to get that good legal job — you'll get it. But if you say to yourself, "Shhh! Well, I tried. Now I'm'a do what I do best." You'll be one of those facing years, as your mom's eyes drop more tears. So make up your mind to do more than just "try". Just do it.

How Come?

how do men hit these women and say they' cool
how do all these older heads give these bad examples to young ones
how do they live wit' that
how come people lie so much for no reason
how come we don't be truthful to each other
how come these gangstas rob people so much
how come people hurt each other
when the person they're beating on was made by god
how come how
—because there's no one to say this

-Lil' Jay

From The Beat: Do you mean there's no one intimate in their lives to say this to them? 'Cause your poem says it loud and clear to anyone locked in here, willing to listen to reason. It's odd, 'cause who in his right mind would not want to be pleasing to God?

Goodbye To Ron

What's up Beat? Man, me, I'm hella mad cause my ninja Ron Ron just got killed by the police. That stuff turned my whole life around.

-Lil' Turk

From The Beat: We are sorry you lost such a close friend. Time is the best healer at times like these so take care of yourself.

Myself

Hey! My name is Diem, I'm from Sacramento. I am a young teen and I'm locked up in Juvie. I'm locked up for robbery (even though I didn't do it). I don't know when I'm getting out. I can't go nowhere when I get home because I'm gonna be on ankle I think. So I'm gonna be on lock down.

When I get home I'ma go to school and do good in school. I might get released tomorrow but I dunno. I'm not sure. They might keep me in a group home. They still have to transfer me to Sacramento, but I don't know if they are or not. They have to send me back because that is where I live.

-Diem

From The Beat: We hope you do go back to school and stay out of juvie.

Ninjas Smile, But Are They Friends

ninja smile, ninja frown
shiestie ninjas come around
don't debate when they hate
love the hate, congratulate
and when they stop, ask 'em not
'cause that's when they start to plot
shiestie ninja, that's what i'm not
love for all is how i ball
and with you, i share a piece
from christ to me
blessed are you
when people insult you persecute
and falsely say evil against you
because of christ
rejoice and be glad
because great is your reward in heaven
evermore

-Lil' Durk

From The Beat: The message of the Gospel could hardly be more plainly put. You need not stew in resentment with faith like this, but rejoice in your higher calling — 'cause that's how you be balling! Heaven is always here and now for those with faith enough to see how the false accuser has no spiritual power of those who refuse to cower and hate and stress, because they know they're blessed.

Conversation Between My Mind And Heart

(Saludos Beat! Well, this is yo' boy, Lil' Spooks, coming at you from this so-called max' unit, writing a conversation between my mind and heart:)
Mind: It's weak up in here.
Heart: I can handle this. It's just part of that crazy life I chose.
Mind: Sooner or later, I'm about go crazy being up in a cell.
Heart: Do what you do, just keep it solid.
Mind: Oh, that's fo' sure, fo' sure! You know the get down.
Heart: Just let these vato's know how I get down.
Mind: I wonder what's gonna happen at court next week.
Heart: Don't even trip off that.
Mind: What you mean?
Heart: Don't even think about that.
Mind: Why?
Heart: 'Cause it's only gonna make it harder to do the time.
Mind: It's hard 'cause I love my hood!
Heart: Just take it day by day, and you will be back!
(Well it's 'bout that time to end this and go back to my room. To be continued. Alrato.)

-Lil' Spooks

From The Beat: In the mix with folks you know (or know of) and folks you don't, everyone tests everyone every day. That takes a lot of attention. Then there are the charges and the court dates, which tyrannize the attention of your mind and heart. Lastly, you choose to focus on your return to the life you knew. Somehow, somewhere, you need to make room to analyze the things you used to do, the life you once led — keep what worked for you and get rid of the rest. How you use this time is your biggest test.

Fake People

Fake people! Man, I got to keep it real with myself, because being around fake people so long, it will mess a ninja's head up. Fake people! You just have to live with these fake people. Real know the real! Just by listening to somebody, sometimes I just can see right into someone before they talk to me — by their act!

We need to get on top of our game and stop acting like everybody be with you on your block is real. Three fourths of them fake as what on the inside. The outside ain't nothing, because I am a real ninja and I got family that is hella fake — and I have to get away from them and get with the ones I have to mess with to be real.

You don't have to fight. You don't have to stand like a statue to be noticed. People can see. You have to come for another chance to listen. Listen to the statue that doesn't speak but tells the truth.

-Choyce

From The Beat: We cut the part where you extolled the perfection of your crew members, 'cause you need to see that the game reduces all players to mental and spiritual catastrophe. Your old enough to see a way out of street life. We're not saying it will be easy, but this halfway strategy just keeps bringing you back to incarceration. We know you have lots of reasons to argue it's impossible, but you know it's not. It's just hard to do. But you're hard enough to see it through, if only you can make up your mind to.

My Life Ain't That Hard

Sometimes my life ain't that hard because nobody can bring me down. It ain't that hard because my family makes it. I can too but I got every thing. My mom's going to move in a house next month. My family is living a fast life - my brother has money, more then me now! He's making good money and I'm glad he is.

My grandmother and grandpa have been working since I was little. Life was so hard for them, my mom looks at me like I'm spoiled but when I get older, It's not going to be pretty anymore. Days past by and now I am 17-years old in a cell. My mom said that when I turn 18 and when I get out, I am going to have to get me a job.

-Brandon

From The Beat: We all have to grow up sometime – it is inevitable and unavoidable. Though some of us have to do it sooner than others but it sounds as though your mom has been and is still being supportive of you. And she's right because you do need to get a job and stay of trouble. Being 18 means it's a whole new ballgame. It's time to grow up.

Trip

People trip off words and it's meaningless…

-Don't trip

From The Beat: We wish you had written more. Even thought we just got half a sentence down, it sounds like you have a good head on your shoulders and people with good sense should always share with the rest of us.

Group Home Bound

What it do Beat? Man I'm light weight excited 'cause I'm supposed to be leaving by Thursday to a group home in the town. But at the same time I'm kind nervous because I'm thinking what if they hella shady and I decide to run.

I mean I don't plan to run, I plan to complete my program 'cause I'm 'bout to be 18 on September 20 and I ain't tryin' to end up in Rita or on Chouchilla so I'll try my best to deal with it regardless.

-Tu Peeze

From The Beat: Yes—we highly recommend dealing with the hardships of a group home until your time is up. If you're treated badly that's another story—but don't run, it only worsens the situation. Use your communication skills, speak to staff, lawyer, or probation officer if problems arise. There are ways to deal with bad placements, but you have to go about it the right way. Good luck!

Touching Down

I'm getting out on Thursday and I hope and pray that I stay out for good.

-Terica

From The Beat: We wish you the best of luck and think you can do it if you put your mind to it (staying out).

this poem go

this poem needs
a better life
and gift
a better wife
so if
it conceives life
this poem
has a right

-Miguel

From The Beat: The life of a poem is pure spirit. So is the wife of the spirit, the flesh? And when spirit conceives life, are you born again in the flesh? And is that the test of a good poem — you know, what makes it go!

Stupid Of Me

Hey everybody, how are you people doing in the hall? Anyway, my name is Diamond D. and I'm in here for something stupid but anyway let me tell you a little about me.

I have a little boy and I have one on the way and I hope I get out on 9-6-06. I hope I do, but I don't have that much to say but keep your head up and stay strong and do what you have to do to stay out of here. I know I will.

-Diamond D.

From The Beat: What kinds of things will you do to stay out? It's helpful to write out a little plan for yourself, and keep it with you so that you can look at it when things get rough or temptation gets strong…best of luck…

RIP Emmit

Brah, you gone and I can't take it that much! But brah, I know you lookin' over yo' cousin Jay everyday. I remember we used to be on like shhh, pullin' hella licks! It used to be me and you brah. I miss you brah! I'm gone hold you down from the bottom to the top. Love you brah.

-Lil' Jay

From The Beat: Imagine his spirit in heaven, sitting in God's bosom, purged of error and now able to see the truth. He's telling you it's time to change while you can still claim freedom and maintain a life worth living. Otherwise: jails, hospitals, death. He's telling you that you deserve the best. Change! Join the blessed. It may be the hardest thing for you yet, but you can pass the test.

Cupcakes

Cupcake, cupcake - realize you are in the hall.
Begging the staff for a collect phone call.
Writing poems and letters like there is no tomorrow,
While she out there filling your heart with sorrow.
Oh damn, you still don't know she's playing?
So basically you believe the things she saying?
No, your roommate ain't hating.
He keeping it real boy your lady been betraying.
Yo' folks say she ain't solid.
Where was she Friday night when you was in here calling?
She was at a club drinking martinis with olives.
So now she's free, out and about.
I know this sounds real gritty.
But I'm just giving y'all this game we teach in Redwood City.

-Lil' Gumby

From The Beat: Nice piece Lil' Gumby. While harsh, it was honest and sounds like it came straight from the heart. We know it can't be easy to maintain relationships with loved one on the outs. It's harder to trust and communicate with one another. We know that there are people out there who do not deserve that trust or even our time and attention. But there are good people too; people who want to be there for us no matter what. Just don't be too quick to push someone away before giving them a chance.

Get Money

See all my ninjas in the Bay get paid
And if you really want to know, I won't wear waves
So bro I'm not trying to speak game
See I been coming back and forth since the age of 10
For robbery, burglary, armed robbery, assault and battery
Three years gone and now I'm back
I can't wait 'till I'm gone

-Ella

From The Beat: You've been through a lot and now you're back where you started, still talking the bull too! What do you think it would take for things in your life to change? You're still so young—there are different roads you can take.

Revenge

I could hate a person I didn't know because it might not be about that person but about their click. They could go out and choose to shoot people, jump them or stab them. So that gives us a reason to hate.

If I see a person from another spot and they did something to me, I would do something to make their people hurt as much as me.

-Kevin

From The Beat: We know we wouldn't be the first people to tell you that too many young people are caught up in a vicious cycle of violence. And we know you have heard folks say this violence has stop, but we what we really want to talk about is the hate. People who live and thrive from hate always lose because that anger and pain doesn't just go to your enemies but it also takes away pieces of you. Just don't forget that hate cuts both ways.

This Is Not Where I Want To Be

Man it's hella hard being in juvenile hall. You have to shower with other men. Can you believe that - shower with other men? But guess what they don't care. You ain't even got yo own pair of drawers or socks. Not to mention these weak Alameda County kicks they got us wearing. Man the socks got holes in 'em and the drawers got stains in 'em. Not all of 'em, it depends who takes the quickest shower and can get to the clothes the fastest. I don't know about you but this ain't the place I want be.

Juvenile hall is modern day slavery. Yes I said slavery. You know you can't go to the bathroom when you want to. I can't wait 'till I get out of here so I can get back to the good life.

-Unknown

From The Beat: We too believe that system could definitely use some work but let's take a step back for a minute. You are in jail so you don't get to make the rules. You have lost your freedoms. The rules of the outs don't apply because you have chosen to break the rules. If you are so unhappy here, you should be thinking of everything and anything you need to do in order to make sure you never come back.

My Big Juvenile Hall Disappointment

My biggest disappointment in life is when I first came to juvenile hall. I was disappointed because it was a stupid thing I did to get here. Also, because my mom and dad and family were disappointed.

I knew I would come to the Hall at least one time in life, but not for the stupid thing I came for. Also, because I could of not been caught if I didn't go to the store instead or going home and stay there.

When I got out of the Hall I didn't have any summer because I was on home supervision so I couldn't leave nowhere.

-Juvie Head

From The Beat: …And now you're back. The reason you were on home supervision is because it's clear that you can't be responsible for yourself. Here you are again in the Hall. For something stupid? Disappointed? You are in control of your life. Stop doing stupid things and you won't end up losing your freedom.

What Am I Going To Do When The Block Gets Old?

Today is 8/08/06, my man, I am good in here, keeping it hood fo all my ninjas, keeping it lit, like you know , staying solid like a rock but I am good I'll be out in a few more weeks back to the hood you know how we do it.

Man I am going to try something new, do it moving like a real ninja, because like they say, the block never gets old, it's always going to be there.

But back to it: I'll be hella disappointed if the block gets old but I'll try to get a job or do something with my life.. but until then I'll be on the block for life, staying away from fake ninjas, and that's what I'll do when the block gets old know that.

-Baby Lou

From The Beat: The block is already old. It got old the first time a gun was fired, the first time a siren came through, the first time a three year old boy saw a "Police line: Do not cross" sign on his street. We're not trying to disrespect your neighborhood – we want to see it respected: We want to see clean streets, safe playgrounds, something besides liquor stores on the corner. We want to see kids your age on that block walking to and from school (without having to worry about getting jumped) making movies, playing ball, shooting pictures, being cool with your neighborhoods. Can you imagine your neighborhood looking like that? Would you want it to?

My Last Beat Within, I Got A Release

What's up Beat this may be my last time 'cause I finally got my E.M. Release so they can come get me any day, any time now. I can't wait, I'm so dang impatient. I'm ready to go home like right this second but I'm bein' patient like God says, I'm tryin' to have a right mind and tryin' to stay away from the negativity…I hope that they come get me very soon. I'm prayin' to God every second every minute…

-Shay

From The Beat: Congratulations on your release—do good and stay out!

Fed-up

I hate a lot of people I don't know. Mainly because one of my family or friends ain't feelin' that person. But, I don't like a lot of ninjas cause they talk too much. They talk to people they don't know and make them enemies.

I know it a lot of ninjas that don't like me, but I could care less.

-Beam

From the Beat: Sounds like you got a lot of hate in your heart Beam. That's not good for your soul. Just 'cause someone doesn't like you, doesn't mean you have to be concerned with them, focus on Beam and life will be lovely. Stay up.

Back Again!! (Part 2)

What's up Beat? I'm back again! This time me and my cousin Vincent are here for warrants. I might go to Camp, but my cousin might be goin' to YA, hopefully he don't.

But I need to stay out of here 'cause I was only on the run for two weeks! Vincent was out for like ten months. Now we back.

Well I'm out! So ya'll be safe in here and out there. Try to stay out ya'll, late!

-Angelo

From the Beat: Sounds like you want to do well. Do you know how to keep yourself out of trouble? It seems like such a shame that so many of your friends and family are locked up. Together, you have the potential to raise each other up, but in the same respect, you may just bring each other down. It's up to you all where you're goin to end up. Be good. Support each other. Peace.

Beat Questions, Beat Answers

Yes you can hate someone you don't know, by personality and actions you can't sense bad in someone.

I began working on cars years ago and where I've been for years, and when I get out of here that is where I'm going soon as I get out of here.

My first big disappointment was about nine years ago when my father passed away and the second was when I ended up in here.

I'm lucky to have learned from my third disappointment. Hopefully I will I never make the mistake of doing anything to ever end up back in here.

-Young Car Mechanic

From The Beat: These are all heartbreaking disappointments... but do you think maybe they might have been lessons in disguise? It sounds as if you have been through terribly difficult times, but that you've come out of them stronger, with a clear eye, ready to live a life with less disappointments!

What It Do Beat?

This your girl, Baby Gurl coming from Oakland. They say I am getting out September 21 and going to a group home or going home or to the CYA. I am going to see my ninja when I go home and all my sisters and lil' girl, you feel me?

They say I have to do three years in the hall but I do not care about doing the three years, I'm just going to pimp these three years in the halls and get it over with. I did the robbery and that made me mad to do what that ninja told me to do and it was sad what happened to me and he got away and left. But my baby daddy got some other breezie pregnant and I am going to beat the breezie for sleeping with my ninja. My ninja's going to pay for what he did to make me mad—to find out what he did behind my back to some other breezie. That was supposed to be my friend and she is going to pay, just like my ninja is going to pay. That messed me up and it makes me feel real bad because I had a baby by him. She is cute and it make me think of him every time I look at my daughter.

-Baby Gurl

From The Beat: You're hurt is easy to understand—you were deceived by a friend and a lover—but now you have your time to serve and your daughter to think about. Her well-being is your responsibility now, and that means letting go of some of yourself. By dwelling on the wrongs that other people did you, you're avoiding your own responsibility in the situation. Also, beating people up doesn't solve anything and could only make things worse for you. The time is now, to move on, step up, rise up! Seeking violence as a solution will only bring further problems for you.

My Brother In A Shelter

The biggest disappointment in my life was finding out my brother had nowhere to live in. He had to go to a homeless shelter. It was disappointing because if I wasn't locked up I couldn't help him.

-Money

From The Beat: Reading these few lines made us want to know more of your story. What brought you and your brother to this situation? Where is he now? Were you and he close growing up? Did your parents or grandparents know he was in a shelter? Tell us more!

Hate

i can't hate nobody i don't know
'cause i don't know them
i feel the same way if somebody hate me
and don't know me

-Young Keith

From The Beat: So you're saying if somebody who doesn't know you hates you, then you hate them, too? How would you know they hate you? 'Cause someone else says so? Don't believe anything you hear, and believe half of what you see.

Stop Hatin'

One time when I got released, I got out and started getting real money to the neck, over the bridge. And ninjas over here, over the waters, they didn't like seeing me eat like a full-grown man. So every time I came around, they had police hot 'cause they goin' around tellin' on the infrastructure. And then, when I start playin' real ball with the haters, they started calling for referees, for fouls.

-Kudah Black

From The Beat: It's the nature of the game. No one can win for losing. The game goes on, but the players die young or live years locked away in prisons. The street game teaches greed and hate, so if you want to escape that fate, find a new game to play — we strongly recommend making money the legal way. Then, when you're released, you go free and stay that way.

People Can Hate

Yes, people can hate when a person not worrying about them type of people, like a person that have a nice car on twenty-four inch rims riding by they' turf or something like that. People hate on people that grind if they getting the most on the block — and my own friends hate, too. And they need to congratulate folks.

-Young Slick Rick

From The Beat: "Don't hate, congratulate!" There's a lot of wisdom in that phrase. But if you congratulate someone who looks like he's coming up big, but is really only setting himself up for a big fall when he's caught up by the long arm of the law, or gets himself in too deep to keep the peace — it's really not good for that person who keeps on balling when he needs to be looking for another calling, a legal way to make his pay. 'Cause every player in the game, in the end gets played. Yanawhasay?

Police Hatin' In The Town

I hate the police, because they judge me wrong. They think everybody who wears Jordans and Girbaud, or Stanford jeans in my neighborhood (EPA) — they label you as a gang member, killer, thief, and drug dealer! And we be trying to eat on the dead-end, and they try to do whatever they can to stop us feeding our folks. EPA Police, stop hatin' and let us eat.

-Kudah Black

From The Beat: Your argument makes sense in a way. 'Cause you've got to find some way to make your pay, to feed your families and pay rent. The trouble is, the black market economy is by definition illegal. And while it's the largest it has been in the U.S. since the 1920's, it is still illegal. So if you want to eat, you need to find a legal way to feed your folks. It may not seem fair to you, but as things stand, that's all there is there for you.

My Thoughts

What's good Beat? You can hate somebody you never met, for example if the person is from a certain area and is someone you are funking with.

My family and my environment made me who am I today, as well as the stuff I've seen and the stuff I went through.

My biggest disappoint is comin' to jail. You can't get no money when you locked up.

-Wallace

From The Beat: Thank you for sharing your thoughts. Maybe this time will let you sit and back think about the kind of life you want to live. Cause beef and money don't seem to be cutting it.

Forced To Grind

Life in Oakland is rough at times, good times and bad times
So a young ninja like me is forced to grind.
Moms lost her job so there's no income
Nothing but money on my mind, so I gotta carry mine
Pockets touching so the only thing that comes to me is robbing and stealing

-Dame

From The Beat: You're not forced to do a god damn thing. Maybe you thought you had no choice, maybe it's all you see on the block, but come now. Are you making any money on lockdown? Do you have health insurance if you get sick? Do you get paid vacations? Are you learning life skills that don't involve guns and cops? The job you have – on the grind – is a terrible job with low wages and, um, no job security whatsoever. If you want to try and get a better job – and you do have a choice you know – ask your P-O or the counselors, or even one of us, for help and suggestions on how to earn an honest living. We want to see you succeed.

Lucky Charm

Candy stars, silver moon
Cherry rain, summer June
Chocolate me, carmel you
You're my lucky charm is what you are
Carmel candy cane
Sweeter than sugar can
I love it when you call my name
My lucky charm is what you are
I dream of you and me on a rendezvous
Somewhere far away on a trip for two
We'll take a ride
A convertible on a straight highway
Boy now's the time to lay you down and make you mine
Just like the cereal chocolate-covered Cheerio
Boy that's every bit of you,
Cherries and lemon-limes
good to me all the time
Sweet to the last drop, Boy
You magically delicious
You are my candy star, silver moon
Cherry rain, Summer June
Chocolate me, caramel you
My lucky charm is what you are
Caramel candy cane
Sweeter than sugar cane
I love it when you call my name
You're my lucky charm is what you are

-Precious Love

From The Beat: You really went there with this piece! We're glad that you have someone so sweet to write about.

My Hate, My Confusion

To tell you the truth I don't hate them, but I do dislike a lot of gangbangers because the simple fact that they killed a lot of innocent people -- and one of those people was my cousin and that's one of the reasons I became a gangbanger, from there every time I see a gangbanger I get into it!

How can I love someone I don't know? To be honest it's hard for me to love someone because all my life people been coming in and out of my life, like it's the thing to do, I hate the fact that I lost a lot of loved ones and it hurts me inside but as I grew I learned to turn weakness into strength and this point on I'm a soldier standing tall with my head up.

-Joseph

From The Beat: Joseph, this is so confusing... tell us more! You hate gangbangers, but you became one? Someone killed your cousin, and now here you are, ready to step in and maybe kill someone else's. This can't be true. You want to turn weakness into strenght, then be strong enough to fight back against this world that would turn man against man, boy against boy, block against block. You've already lost so much, you don't need more pain...Go to school, get that job, and then come back and save other people who also might just be somebody's cousin. You are the solution, don't you see that?

Pray For Me

What's up with it Beat, this your boy. Lil' Man Man coming from this max unit. They try to wash me and my cousin up... they're trying to put us under the jail, but we some gangstas out here from the block where we go stupid, you know what I'm saying.

I just want to tell everybody to tell everybody to pray for Lil' Man Man

-Lil' Man Man

From The Beat: We pray for you, Lil' Man Man. Every week. But we're not just praying for the courts to let you go. We're also praying for you to rise above all this "We go stupid" BS that is killing you and your friends one by one. We know from your life story that you've been through it, but that doesn't mean you have to keep putting yourself through it. So tell it to us straight and tell it to us real: How are you going to make turn your death-style into a life-style?

On The Unda

The day is coming and I'm 'bout to find out if I'm getting charged as an adult. I don't think they is cause they really don't got nothing on me. I hope they tell me good news. When I get out I'ma be unda tho, 'cause I can't come back here.

I got to do what I got to to stay out of here. I'm still gon' be in the hood, but I'm a be under and with all the girls. But I just hope everything goes right, so I can get out. To all -- stay up.

-Lil' Suave

From The Beat: We hope for your sake that when you say "on the under" you really mean, that you're going to bury that past life so far under that you forget where you put it. The only way to stay out of jail for keeps is to get completely out of the game, and stop breaking laws. There are people out there who have no choice, they have no skills besides street skills. But you're different. We already know you're good at reading and you could probably get great grades if you wanted to – and better yet, you have a sport you love that can keep you focused. In other words, you have every reason in the world to succeed.

You Gon' Hear About Me

When I get out of ALACO (hopefully on EM on the 15th) I'm gonna go back to the studio and make hella new beats. 'Cause when I was on the outs I was making dummy ass slaps. I'm gonna cop me a MPC drum machine and make some hyphy slumpers.

In the future, Keak, E40, Mista Fab and Too Shor is gonna be buyin' beats off me for like 10 g's each and then I'm gonna cop me a black 2008 Range Rover with wood -grain and vanilla interior. And I'm gonna be fitted daily in Girbaud's and fresh white tee's, iced out.

All the Bay Area artists will be hittin' me up for slaps and I'll be there with all the best bay producers like Sean T. and Droop-e.

But I'm AC, and you gon' hear about me in the future.

-Young AC

From The Beat: We're ready to tell the world that we knew you way back when, when you were dreaming of a brigher future, pouring your heart soul and talent into the music. When you get famous, will you come back to the Hall and tell the youngsters how you did it?

Disappointment In Life

my biggest disappointment in life
is coming back to jail
i hate for comin' back to this place
this ain't the life to live
it ain't nothin' in jail that makes you feel good
but this is my last stop

-Young Keith

From The Beat: We understand why you'd hate being in jail. So what we want to know is how you plan to make this your last stop, 'cause you know it takes more than just saying so.

Where Did It Start To Go Wrong?

Everything started to go wrong when I came to this place
It seems like every time I look up someone just has to look at my face
Where did it start to go wrong?
Being with the wrong person at the wrong time
All that's on my mind is time
I can't wait to get out this place
It's better than going to YA
My birthday is the 17th of this month
Being in this place makes me want to get crump
This is my first time in this place and my last
I need to be with my daughter, not in here like an ass

-Maurice

From The Beat: Happy Birthday, Maurice. We know that in a way, as hard as it is, if these peoms represent the true direction of your soul that means you've given yourself the best present there is: A second chance!

Hating Someone

you can hate someone if you if mad
you can hate a person if you don't know 'im
you can hate a person if you don't know 'im
i can hate a person if i feel danger
i can hate if someone endanger my mom
i can hate if someone endanger my sister
i would hate if someone endanger my brother

-Alfonzo

From The Beat: You are pretty clear about what it takes to hate a stranger. If you feel that stranger is a source of serious danger to yourself or to those you love, it's instinctual to feel animosity. But that animosity may or may not make life safer — one foolish act may simply increase the danger. And what if your feeling is just plain wrong and there was nothing to fear all along?

Deep Passion

Her words deep like the ocean.
Conversations smoother than smooth.

When I'm around her my heart pumps
Like a crackhead fiendin 4 the rock.

Skin the color Egyptian sands.
Her motions make me want to be next to her.

I'm her tea at night.
She's my coffee in the morning.

Being wit' her there is no time limit.
She's my queen of dreams.

-Nuh Roy

From The Beat: Love is a good thing and is unavoidable. Just remember you are young so take it slow and treat her right.

As an Adult?

When I go to court I hope they don't charge me as an adult. I don't think they is 'cause they can't mess wit' me, I don't got my name for nothing. I got caught up at the wrong time. I'm gonna still do what I do but I'm gon' be under, feel me. But when I get out I'm gonna still be wit' my peoples. I always keep it solid that's just what Lil' Suave do, you feel.

I'm gonna get at ya Beat, next week. RIP Paco, C and Little Will.

-Lil' Suave

From The Beat: We hope they don't try you as adult too, then again even the fear of being tried as an adult and loking at prison time, you act like it's no big thing?? Wake up Suave! We're tired of seeing young men like you, with talent, potential, and secret dreams of brightness in the future, getting swallowed up by the system. You sit here and say that "they can't mess with" you, but it's not true... here they are, messin' with you: You've been wearing county blues and county shoes. You know that even if you beat this case, the system will keep messin' with you, too... and steal your dreams and hopes - unless you come up with a better plan that "I'm gonna still do what I do, but on the under."

Not Supposed To Hate

Can you hate someone you don't know? You're not supposed to hate anyone, but you can dislike like someone. But people should not hate each other.

-Marcus B5

From The Beat: When you say "you're not supposed to hate anyone," where does that lesson come from? Who or what says that? How can you live up to that principle? (Next time, Marcus, don't write on three topics, but only on one. That way, you can write more.)

Where Have I Been

I know where I been. The 'hood, and that's probably where I'm gone be.... when I get out. But I feel like it's time for a change for real. And I'm going to the group home and I really don't know where it's gone lead me. But I hope it's somewhere I wanna be.

-Hot Rod B2

From The Beat: Besides the 'hood Hot Rod, where do want to be? (We hope you really see that the 'hood will lead you here, where you don't want to be.) How do you see your future? To make changes you want, you have to look ahead, decide where you'd like to be and what you'd like to do, and then make a

Five Months Clean

I've been five months sober
It's hell because I'm a heavy smoker
I miss my house
I miss having a 'port in my mouth
The number one thing I really miss is in my girl
Man what a world
Crazy
Once a baby
Not no more
Knees on the floor
Now feet touching the ground
16 years old
I hope when I get older
I can make lots
Of gold

-Stony B2

From The Beat: Well, if you want to make lots of gold, then you really have to work for it. "No pain, no gain." You've already gained a foundation to be sober, and that's an accomplishment you should try to build on. You're on the edge of adulthood where responsibilities that children don't have will be thrown at you. How are you preparing yourself to meet them?

My Biggest Disappointment

My biggest disappointment in my life is that in jail I pretend to be down and dumb, when on the outs I gotta 3.5. In here I play the fool just not to punch in the next man face.

But if there's one thing I learned in jail its patience for the ignorant who aggravate just so you can swing first and catch the charge.

-S B5

From The Beat: We can tell from both of these pieces that you are experiencing some extreme stress. We hope you can continue to exercise patience so that you don't give in to your impulses — the kind that lead to new charges and more time. (We took out your last line because we don't think it serves any purpose other than to make other people angry at you.)

If I Hate You, I Know You

Hate to me is a real strong word. To me, if I want to hate you, most likely I want to hurt you. And why would I want to hurt someone that I don't know? That is the big question.

I think the only reason a person could hate on someone they don't know is over money and females, the to most important things to a man, or at least it should be. Most people would do anything for the two, and that means hating a person that has money that you want. It shady, but that the way people live.

-Fg B5

From The Beat: This is interesting, Darius. Why should money and females be the most important things to a man? Some people find God more important, or their own beliefs and values, their families, their children, even their lives. Are all these things less important than money and women? (We can't publish your other piece since it violates all kinds of Beat rules, like threatening your "enemies" with named weapons.)

The Biggest Disappointment In Life

My biggest disappointment in my life is me making bad choices, blinded by what I have in the future. Like stay out late, being totally disrespecting to the people that feed me. That's my biggest disappointment in life.

-Jeff B2

From The Beat: What are you going to do to change that disappointment, Shaw? Are you planning to change some of the thing you used to do so that you don't disappoint yourself?

Past And Future

I've been on my own since I was little on the run. I seen people die. I lived under cars, in parks, in stolen cars, people's back yard. It was hard. I've been in and out of group homes, foster homes, all over the Bay Area. Me and my family never had a relationship and when I get out I see myself with my family to fix the bridge that's broken

-Steven B2

From The Beat: If you don't mind us asking, why was that bridge broken in the first place? When you were out there on your own, sleeping in parks, cars, and people's back yard, why didn't (or couldn't you) you just go home? We hope whatever caused that bridge to break will fixed when you get out. What's your repair plan?

Disappointments

The biggest disappointment I had was when I went to Mission High. Every time I got in trouble on the days of the games, not on purpose. One time we were getting ready to go play a game against Galileo. I was getting ready when the dean came and brought me too his office and said I can't go or play. Then I was going to play a game against ISA. Then I got in trouble and couldn't play.

-Jr B5

From The Beat: We don't quite understand, JR. You say you keep getting in trouble on the days of the games, but that it's not on purpose. But you don't tell us what kind of trouble. Did you do something to get you in trouble, or was the dean just picking on you for no reason?

That Kind Of Person

The reason I can say I hate somebody from somewhere else — or, as the police and politicians say, "sets" — is because I've had either a problem with someone from that area or one of my homies had a run in with some people from that area. And the thing is, I believe what my homies say because we don't bullshhh.

Do I hate somebody I don't know? Yeah, because I'm that type of person. I'm always plottin'

–S B5

From The Beat: We can't say that this is one of your better pieces... What does it mean that you're "that type of person?" How do any of us become the type of people we become? How did you?

In God's Hands

My biggest disappointment in life was when I found out that I might be going to YA. But everything happens for a reason and God ain't gone put nothing on you that you can't handle. But I'm just leave everything in God's hands and hopefully everything will work out for me.

-Lg B2

From The Beat: Just leaving things in God's hands and hoping for the best won't get you where you want to go (or keep you from where you don't want to go). God gave you free will to exercise for good or for bad. That's why they say that "God helps those that help themselves." With God's help, your future and success is in your hands.

Tears In My Eyes

The street gettin' way too rough
I went crazy in my mind when my family told me
Tay bust
Too many homies dyin'
Without y'all it ain't the same

I got tears in my eyes but I can't cry
Blood on my hands but it's not mine
Smoke in the air but I ain't
Why do have to watch all of my soldiers die

-Anonymous B2

From The Beat: This sad story gets told every week in our pages, and we don't know how to stop it. Something is very wrong when so many parents have to bury their children instead of the other way around. Are you doing anything to find a way out of this war zone? What?

Wasting Time In YGC

My biggest disappoint is being in here while I could be doing bigger and better. Why not? I be saying to myself, "What am I doing here? Am I staying to think or to waste time? What da deal?

All I know is I did my crime, I here to do my time. But I would love to stay out for I could talk to all my girlfriends, stay home and go to school and work, find a place.

-Rlyz B2

From The Beat: What's the answer to your question? Are you here wasting time or are you using it to prepare for that future you want to have? How will you stay out of here once you walk out of here?

Hating Someone You Don't Know

I think it really depends on what the situation is. Like if somebody did something to one of my family members, then I guess if I didn't know that person, I still would hate them.

-Squeak B5

From The Beat: Of course, if someone does something to your family, then you already "know" something about them. But can you hate someone just because he or she comes from a different place, looks different from you, believes in a different religion, and is a complete stranger?

YGC, The Biggest Disappointment

To have to come here in YGC. I learned dat why run from da group if you know you comin' back. You don't get nuttin' out of it.

-Jeremiah B2

From The Beat: It's interesting that only a very few (like you) ever think about where they are running to, but only where they are running from. Wouldn't it be easier if someone just did their program and got their time over with? Running doesn't solve problems, it only creates more.

Where I'm Going

Once I graduate from high school, I plan on going to a school of cosmetology so I can become a beautician. But that not all. I also plan on becoming a dancer doing hip-hop. Those are my dreams for now until something else come by.

-Queeela Quee GU

From The Beat: Those are all dreams that can be achieved by taking one step at a time — but especially that first step, graduating from high school. Everything worthwhile takes time, sacrifice, and patience. Don't let the messed up situation you're in now hold you back from achieving these goals.

Biggest Disappointment

I have had a lot of disappointments in my life. My biggest one was getting locked up over the same thing (which is a dope case). Dang, I don't know what to write!

Well, I'm sitting here in my purple n` khaki
Dese haters mugging just tryna mack me
Next time I won't get caught and whatnot
Won't catch me in dis spot

-Crackhead GU

From The Beat: If your goal is to do it better and slicker the next time ("The next time I won't get caught"), then we're here to tell you we'll see you back behind these walls again. You're writing a ticket to return unless you figure out a way to stop doing what brought here. Do you have any idea how many times we read the same sentence, only to see the writer back in the halls in a week or a month or a year? Is that what you want? If you think that you can outsmart the law this time by being slicker than the last time, you are thinking like a child (which is to say, you aren't thinking at all), and you will be only playing yourself in a game that is played out.

Lots Of Disappointments

CITO got a lot of disappointments that take place in his life. Disappointments go on so much that I don't know when I'm not disappointed. All I know is that CITO gets disappointed when CITO don't got his 'dro.

-Cito B4

From The Beat: Yeah, we know CITO gonna smoke his 'dro. But does smoking make your disappointments disappear, or just temporarily fade from thought? We're not saying that marijuana can't help you get through some pain (that's why they have medical marijuana), but we still worry when it becomes THE MEDICINE to get you through, when sometimes what you really need is a clear and sober mind. Does CITO agree?

I Could Hate

I could hate someone I don't know because I don't like the way they act or the way they look at me. For example if I am walking downtown and someone looks at me funny or starts to mug at me, then of course I would not like them. But then if I think about it, sometime then it could be the way they are or it could just be the look of their face

-Abby B2

From The Beat: People always say "don't judge a book by the cover" or "only God can judge me," but from what you write, it sounds like that's easier said than done. Have you ever been in a situation where you came to know the person you thought you hated and changed your judgment about them?

Missing Out

What it do, Beat? It's yo' boy from the university. You know how that go. See, I was gone for a minute. I was missing out on all the Js, fits, fitted hats, and hella other shhh.

I was really missing out on females. I don't go the other way. My money too straight. So get on my hype. I got a female that been holdin' me up for a minute. But you know me doing my thing. I'm out, so stay up!

- Birdman LCRS

From The Beat: Oh it's a matter of time before you come back to the hall or worse. You already know we cut a chunk of garbage from this piece. It's too bad we aren't as thrilled as you are in getting back home, given we already know how this cameo will be played out.

A World Of Confusion

My life seems like a delusion, a world of confusion
And they ask why we be using
Abusing ourself, messing up our mental health
So we answer, "Shut your mouth
Just leave my alone"
I might not be grown
The world, as I know it — I don't like what I've been shown
Just leave me alone
Too many words, yet not enough to express all the stress
That lays at rest deep inside my chest
I can't take it anymore, the trigger might get pressed
Then will be relieved, then nobody's depressed, be blessed!

-Jezebel GU

From The Beat: You may not have enough words to express it/But those you do use give an effective message/That you have the ability to write such a piece/We hope will allow you some stress to release/Pressing triggers won't work, it's never the way/To find blessings — only a guarantee that depression will stay/So keep writing and thinking as well as you do/And this confusion you feel will, it pass, too.

If I Could Start Over

If I could start my life over, I think I would not start over because I love my life and tha life I lived too much to start over and because me and my ninjas is Taliban, and we don't respect nothing that don't respect us. To all y'all that respect us, it's all good.

-Baby Purp B1

From The Beat: When you say you love your life, we assume you mean that you also love being locked up because that is a definite part of your life. Or do you just love the things that get you here? Do you respect yourself? What about you do you respect the most? What should others respect about you? What should we respect about you? If it's just the "power" you think you have by being "Taliban," then how did you end up here with no power even to wear your own underwear? We think you need a reality check, and we hope this experience gives it to you. Otherwise, you'll find yourself buried deep in a hole under the control of men with guns and all the power they need to disrespect you day and night.

In 10 Years

In 10 years where I'm going to be is in the WNBA aiming to get a high school diploma and go to a four-year college to study an' be a basketball player. But first, before I get into college, I'm going to get a good job that pays so I can get a house and get everything that I need to be prepared for. I'm go play basketball for UCSF

-Rodnika GU

From The Beat: We hope you succeed in these goals, Rodnika, but just know that in order to do all these things it will take a lot of discipline and sacrifice — and that getting your basic education is the foundation for all. This means that you may have to let some friends go who're not on the same path as you. And you will certainly have to let some of your own actions in the past go so you can move into a different future. But get that education because you can't play basketball, or do much of anything else, without it.

Welcome Back

What's good, Beat? This yo' boy coming straight out of the academy, ya feel me? But you know I'm about to touch next week, back on the block, so all you ninjas, chirp me up. Back to what I do—smoke weed, different shhh like that. I can do this shhh with my eyes closed—that's how I do shhh on the streets. You know I been in LCR for a hot minute, but its' nothin', 'cause I know you see it. Am out.

- Birdman LCRS

From The Beat: Well you finished your program at the Ranch and will be free this coming week Birdman. What did you gain from this experience? Not much if you are talking about heading right back to the block. Such ashame you can't see beyond the block and smoking weed. See you in the hall!

Heading Towards Home And Goals

My family is the major part of my life. I will do anything to go home and be with my family and be the man of the house. I am never going to come back to YGC. Instead I'm going to finish high school and finish college, and then I'm going to work at the S.P.C.A. and work with animals.

-Vince B1

From The Beat: We're glad you're determined never to come back here, Vince. You say you'll do anything to go home, but it's when you're home that you'll have to rededicate yourself to doing anything to stay there! We also love the goals you've set for yourself. School is the key, so if you really want to work with animals (and we would love that kind of job), then stick to it. Never give up!

Thoughts

Thoughts that run through my mind are not right because to me they are like kill, steal, and destroy, and smokin' weed, stayin' on tha block, and doing tha same thang. You can't just say, "I want to change," and wake up in the morning and change, so that's some of the thoughts that run through my head.

-Lil' Baby Purp B1

From The Beat: You're so right, simply wishing to change does not lead to instant change. Everything worth having in life is worth working for, and all of it takes time and effort, discipline and maturity. But one thing, LP, if you begin picturing the change you want — if you begin to see yourself doing the things you know you should be doing, like going to school, and not doing those things you know you shouldn't do (you gave a good list of those), you will find it much easier to start down the path of change. There's an old saying that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. We hope you start that journey.

I Need You In My Life

Chorus: 2 xs
Baby, oh, Baby
Baby, you're mine
Baby, I need you
In all of my life

Baby, when I meet you
You're the only cutie I want to be with
The one to tell, "You're my only beauty"
You're the one for me
I'm the one for you
Let me fill all your fantasy
Let me give you a kiss
Let me hold you tight
Looking at the moonlight
Looking so bright
Looking at the stars
Aiming at our hearts
Saying, "Never leave each other"
Because we're the chosen ones
Baby, you amaze me
Baby, you drive me crazy
I love you
An' I need you with me
Please give me a chance
I'll leave your heart in a trance
I'll be your only man

Chorus: 2 xs
Baby, oh Baby
Baby, you're mine
Baby, I need you
In all of my life

Sabes que te quiero y te necesito
(You know I miss you)
I want to be the only one
Your papasito (daddy) eres bien hermosa
Eres preciosa eres para mi
Eres to me rosa,
You're beautiful
You're wonderful to me
You're a rose to me) so classified
Baby, you're fine
Assassin is the baddest
When it comes to love
No matter what people think
I'm going to win your love
Just be my queen
I'll be your king
To the day that we die
That will be my big dream
Just me and you
If you let me
Let me show you love
And fill all of your dreams

Chorus: 2 xs
Baby, oh, Baby
Baby, you're mine
Baby, I need you in all of my life

Baby aqui me despido (here I say good bye)
an' be your cupido (cupid)
I told you everything
Baby, you're my suspiro (sigh)
I love you
I need you
Can't you really learn to love me?
Shorty, give me a chance and I'll make you happy
This oldie is for you
And it comes from my heart
I love you, mamacita
Please don't doubt my heart
When you sleep at night
Just think of me
I'll think about you
And I'll keep you in my dreams

Chorus: 2 xs
Baby, oh, Baby
Baby, you're mine
Baby, I need you in all of my life

-Slow Jamddie LCRS

From The Beat: Wow, what a romantic piece Slow Jamddie. It sounds like you have a special lady. Did you just write this love poem for the hell of it, or is your love waiting for you on the outs? Now off topic, what's the plan to get through this period of your life, and what is your plan upon getting out of the system?

Not A One-Night Stand

It's Young Money in the club
And I'm lookin' for a thug
So I can fall in love
And when I say love, man
I mean love
I'm not just lookin' for the sexy type
Not one of them girls
Not just on of them girls you have overnight
I'm not talkin' about somethin' like a one night stand
I'm tryna be your man
I wanna be able to be with you
For the rest of my life
I don't just wanna call you baby
I wanna make you my wife
I wanna keep it real with you
I'd spend a mil with you
So you can keep it real with me
And we can make this work
And the love that we have for one another
I just like the love of a sister and a brother
So love is true
Keep it real with me
And I'll keep it real with you
You can be my baby girl
And I can be your baby boy
Maybe we can spend some time
You can be my sunshine
So, baby girl
Don't it feel good to be mine?
Leave all your worries
And troubles behind?

-T Money LCRS

From The Beat: Have you found one lady already you hope to spend the rest of your life with? Or is this a little story how you envision your life outside of the system? We hope when you find this "baby girl," you will have your life together so there will not be any worries coming from you, at least the worries that come with one who is in and out of the hall.

My Baby Mama

I'm missing my baby mama
I'm thinking about her every day
I wish I could be with you right now
My baby mama, Jeannie, is my wife to be
I miss kissing my girl
I miss hugging her
I miss just being with her
I miss her sexy ass voice
I miss the way she feels
I miss her family, the way that they treat me
I miss the way how her mom give me a talk
I just miss my baby mama, Jeannie
And love her to death
I really love my baby mama
I hope you do go in the Walden House
With my bra girl, Criselda

-Young Harlem LCRS

From The Beat: We too hope she gets into Walden House, especially if she is serious about beating the problems that keep beating her. There is way too much at stake, like your baby! Good luck to you too Young Harlem in

It's Cold In These Streets

Man, it's cold in these streets. Everybody think they patnas are they real patnas, but they not. They say they love you but they really don't. When you are locked up, they don't write you, not one letter, but they "love" you. Then, when you get back to the block, "I missed you, bra. I was thinkin' about you, but wasn't worried about you, when you was in the hall." Holla at ya boy.

-Baby Purp B1

From The Beat: When you're on the outs, do write to the homies that are locked up? We can think of only one way to avoid this cold reality, BP, and that is to avoid coming here in the first place...

Coming Here, My Biggest Disappointment

My biggest disappointment in life is when I came to juvi this time on a weak-ass case with the homies. But it's coo', dough, 'cause hopefully I'll be getting out in the next couple months. But I'm hella mad 'caused I missed hella shhh. I missed the prom. Yeah, me and the homies was go' be big. We was go' let 'em know we is in the buildin'. Not a sound, b.

Then I missed the summer jams. I heard it was hella hot, like 108 degrees or something. The homies said it was crackin'. It had hella females and just goin' dumb, ya heard. Then I missed hot August nights, bra bras.

Another disappointment was when ma bra got killed and I was in here. I went dumb retarded, but its coo'. But I gotta slide back to the room an' do them push-ups, feel me, 'cause beast bra.

-Al-Bundy B5

From The Beat: We're curious, Al, how you thinking boasting about being a beast is going to lead to less disappointments in the future, like the ones you lay out here? You've already missed a lot of what is best about being a teenager, so what do you think your future holds if you don't make the connection between what you were doing and what you're doing now? Without some major changes, we don't see a lot of females in your future...

Not Running

Is yo' boy, Young Chuck, in B1. Man, my PO playing. I been in B1 for like, fifty days, an' she came to see me two times. That's the shhh. That make me want to run from the group home, but this time I'm go' stay for my mom. Sometime I look at my homies and a lot of them ran from group homes an' came back to YGC.

-Chuck B1

From The Beat: Well, at least you can see that when you run from a program you're really running to the hall! We're glad your mom motivates you to do your program, even when you're tempted to run, and we hope you'll finally see that not running is not just for your mom, but for you too. You know, Chuck, all of us want to run away from lots of things all throughout our lives. It takes the maturity of adulthood to stick it out even when the temptation is to run. We hope you live up to what you've written as you move into young adulthood.

My Biggest Disappointment

Being locked up is my biggest disappointment because I have to listen and do everything that people I don't even know tell me to. Also, people in my family look down on me now, and so do people who are locked up. This is also a disappointment because I can't see my girl or even my baby.

-Cordero B1

From The Beat: Do you feel that you've lost something, like a little self-respect, now that you're locked up, Cordero? If you are disappointed in yourself for allowing these strangers to have control over you, then you have to find a way not to do the things that give the system that kind of power. Your girl and your baby need you with them, so when you get out, do what you know you have to do to stay out.

I'm Out

I'm out of the hole in a few and I am not going to let none of y'all hold me down. I am fixin' to go to dis group home and knock it out, so keep yo' boy in y'all prayers. I'm out.

-Dq B4

From The Beat: You're in our prayers, DQ — but part of our prayers are to you that you will figure out that the one really holding you down is yourself! Good luck in the grouper.

Can You Hate Someone You Don't Know?

Yeah, I hate people that I don' t know, because me and the homies are beefing with some cat-ass bustas because of some other shhh. And you got suckas wanting to get in the beef, ready to get smurked and flipped like a burger patty and they don't even know why they getting in the beef. So that's why I hate them.

But let me say one more thing. I don't really hate them because I'm not a hater, but I don't like them. So to the people just wanting to be a follower, don't be a leader.

-Art Cash B4

From The Beat: Sounds to us that there are a lot of followers in this game, including you. After all, did you create the game? Did you write the rules? You don't like people who "don't even know why they getting in the beef" — which means you do know why you're in it. Did you create the reasons for being in the beef, or did you just accept reasons that others handed to you? What does it mean to be a follower? What does it mean to be a leader?

My Biggest Disappointment

My biggest disappointment is being in this place letting them take my freedom, always having to ask every time I want to get up and do something, not having control of what I want to do. I hate being locked up in a room that has a door dat I can't open. I feel like a bird that cannot fly, a fish dat cannot swimming.

-Mario B4

From The Beat: That feeling you describe of a bird that can't fly or a fish that can't swim is what jail is all about. But is your disappointment with the place that is designed to make you feel that way, or with yourself for "letting them take" your freedom. Actually, you gave it away for them to take, and only you can prevent it from happening again when you fly out of this cage.

Biggest Disappointment: Getting Locked Up

My biggest disappointment in life so far has been getting locked up even though this is my first time. It's still a disappointment because I told myself I would be the one not to get locked up.

-Maurice B2

From The Beat: One thing this must have taught you, Maurice, is that telling yourself you won't get locked up is not enough. You also have to avoid doing the things that lead to lock-up... To ensure you don't disappointed yourself in the future, what changes are you going to make?

My Biggest Disappointment: I Messed Up

My biggest disappointment in life is when I messed up, I let my hot ass girl friend cat off with a dumb shhh fool. Or maybe it's I never had a dad or full family unit. I think that if my dad and other fam was around, I'd probably have a stronger foundation to grow up and be a good kid. I definitely want to raise my children and make sure they grow up right.

-David B4

From The Beat: We bet you are right that if your dad and family had been around and supportive, you'd have the foundation you need to be the person you want to be. But having said that, the fact is that you messed up, and now you have to find the way not to mess up in the future. Keep that vision of being the good father you want to be clearly in your mind, and let it be the motivation you need to do the right thing.

Where's The Love

W'a's up Beat Within? My biggest disappointment is when my friends and family ain't never there for me. Most people I know, I look at them with another sense — a sense to think of them every way but good. Because the reason I'm in here is because of my friends. They ran and left me to get caught up.

-Young Pop-up B4

From The Beat: Are you really being honest with yourself? Aren't you here because you did something that gave strangers the power to put you here — whether your friends ran or not? Of course, it's good to take the accurate measure of your so-called friends so you won't put trust in people who aren't worthy of it. But it would be even better to stop doing the things that lead you here, whatever your friends do or don't do.

Disappointing Myself As A Follower

My biggest disappointment in life is being a follower instead of being a leader for myself and doing the right things in wrong situations. If I was to move out and find new people in my life, I would be different because I would start my life all over to be a better person.

-Troy B4

From The Beat: So tell us, what's preventing you from become that different person you want to be? Yes, it's hard to stand up for yourself and do what you know to be right, whatever your friends want to do. But then, are the consequences of following their lead easy?

Hate

I don't hate anybody, I didn't know Hitler so I can't hate him... can't hate nobody I don't know in person.

-Crachead GU

From The Beat: Are there people your family hates or your friends hate for their own reasons, but that you don't know? How do you feel about them?

Win, Lose, Or Draw

I'm real like Jesse James
You fake like Jon Wayne
This ain't a game
This is a stick up kid simple and plain
Yeah we living in the last days I pray for my son
I pray to God that I hope he don't come
To curse me, there's evil and it's in every corner and second I found
And I know that the devil's always lurking around
With this stick up hit him, leave him on the ground
With my big gun hit him spit bullets by the rounds
Puerto Rican, Mexican, and black and also San Francisco runs in my blood and over my jeans
I know my young one going to be as crazy as me
If not then maybe more
Well that's my baby boy
Ride or die for my family why wouldn't I for sho
See all these suckas think that they ready to see us
Shadow aka Lil' Savage is who I'm being
Get the message or get messed up by gonorrhea
I just hope that you getting the message that's here
While growing up I had my step-mom not my real ma or pa
But in the streets when you got beef you with win, lose, or draw.

-Lil' Shadow B4

From The Beat: So you think you can shoot the devil with bullets and put him on the ground. Sound like the devil is whispering in your ear and laughing behind your back. We look around at all the young men and young women we see putting themselves in the hands of strangers to tell them how to live every minute of the day, and we wonder where those who win or draw are? We hope you're getting the message, too, but it doesn't appear that you are... We don't know how much more of this (and the much worse "this" that the system has in store for you) before you do get the message, but we hope it's before you get it by finding that you've slipped a little too much. We hope you don't find yourself looking back from a dark hole saying, "If only..."

Where Have You Been

I been mostly everywhere in the Bay... I sure can get around on my pocket bike. I like being out late night riding around just 'cause I get that free feeling, like I don't have a care in the world. I like the excitement of getting around independently. Sometimes I ride my pocket bike in the cuts, get it.

-Crackhead GU

From The Beat: Independence and freedom are wonderful things, so we hope this experience — which strips you of both — is enough for you to change some things in your life in order to keep and protect that freedom you love. (Maria, we would like it if you would choose just one topic and write about it in detail, than to write about all three topics with just a couple of sentences each.)

She So Sexy

She so sexy
She got me on a hype
For ecstasy
That I can't get rid of
I'm a victim, baby
I'm tellin' you
Exactly what a man needs
She's my lady
In ecstasy

-T-Shawn LCRS

From The Beat: Lots of people say that love is as addictive as any drug, but obviously what you write comes off like you have this hunger/drive for ecstasy. We hope you have it in you to beat this and not let it beat you down, 'cause it will. You need to utilize this time away from her and focus on other ways to enjoy your life. Use the ranch to grow, not just chill.

I think that if my dad and other fam was around, I'd probably have a stronger foundation to grow up and be a good kid.

Not Ready For A Child

My biggest disappointment in life is having a kid. It's a big disappointment because I'm young and I'm not ready for a kid. Also another reason why is because I don't even like the baby's mama.

-Jokes B4

From The Beat: Your first reason for being disappointed to bring a new life into the world (that you are too young) is a sign of maturity. The second reason (that you don't like the mother) is a sign of immaturity. It was that immaturity that allowed you to father a child without thought of the consequences. We hope you develop the mature part, and leave the childish part behind.

My Friends Disappoint Me

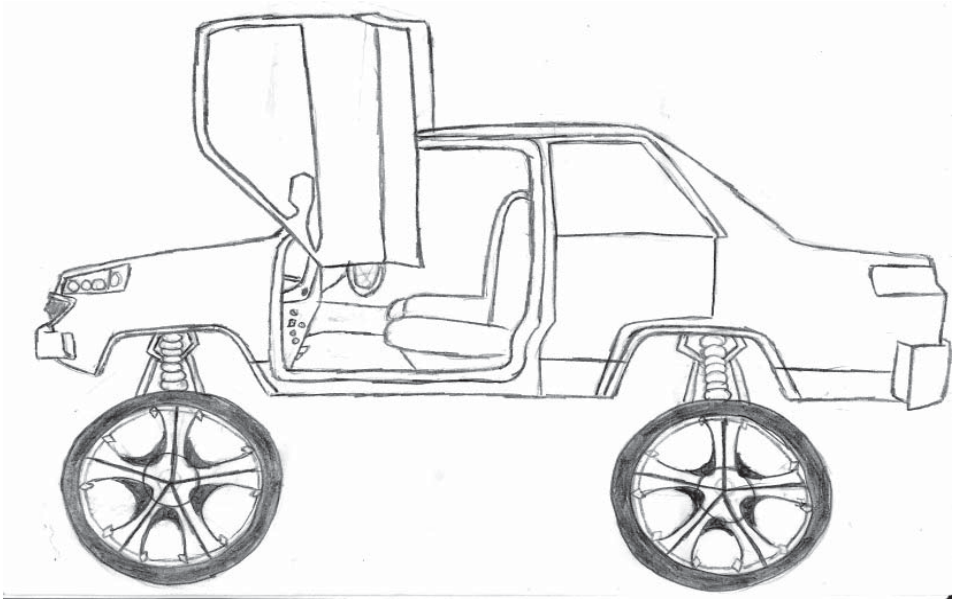
My biggest disappointment in life is hanging with the wrong person. I would not be here in YGC if it was for not them. People always thought that I would not be in here. I thought I would not be in here, always putting on this purple and khaki instead of putting my name brand clothes. See, while I am in here the girls try to punk me in here. I have to see these girls every day on the hour just about.

Another disappointment in life is just letting a man take my money, in a way just pimping me, using me, taking me from my home, from my mom, my puppy — from the ones that love me.

This system is a disappointment to me. People act like they care, act like they want to help you, but really it seems like they want to hurt ya, not help you.

-Jennifer GU

From The Beat: We have to remind you that you will always have "friends" that can lead you into mischief, so in the end, it's not them but you who put yourself here. You can only be responsible for your choices, not theirs. Now that you are wise enough to know some of the disappointments that are built into being in the system, we hope you take all this as a life lesson to be learned — and, therefore, never



Death Of My Friends, My Biggest Disappointment

First off I wanta say, w'at da bizz Beat? But I wanta say is that my biggest disappointment in life is all my dead ninjas. Man, all da homies dropping like flies, and that shhh ain't sweet. Dey trying to take all my young life out da game and da game need soldiers like me. But sometimes I just ask myself why ninjas want us out da game. But it's gravy baby we still got young life runnin' wild holdin' it down. But man, ninjas really getting' killed and we ain't tryin' to wind up six feet deep.

-G B4

From The Beat: There's a certain schizophrenic quality to this piece, G. You are disappointed to see so many of your homies paying the ultimate price for playing "the game." But at the same time, you still boast about "runnin' wild," and being "soldiers." It seems like you want it both ways — you want to keep doing the things that lead so many of your friends to die, but you also hate that so many of your friends are dying. Just a thought for you to consider: None of those young men who you've buried (and none of those buried on the "other side") was "tryin' to wind up six feet deep," but that's where they ended up anyway. Once you lose this game, you can never play any game ever again.

Prostitution

Don't ask me no questions, I won't tell you no lies
Just like this girl who says nobody been between her thighs
But if you look in her eyes, you can see she telling you lies
Because when you start to tell her the truth see begins to cry
And I ask her, "Why do you let ya'self be disrespected
And yo' reputation affected?"
But this is the choice that you selected
Because you thought prostitution was the solution.

-Baby B4

From The Beat: Well, Baby, this is a clever poem, but why point your finger at someone who chooses prostitution as a ticket out, rather than at someone who chooses robbery or drug sales? Are those choices somehow worthy of respect? Forget how the other man (or woman) is making his or her "unrespectable" money, or living his or her "unrespectable" life style, and focus on your own actions — the ones that put you in a cell where you can write such clever lines.

Don't Let Hatas Take You Down

What's up man? Stay focused, get money, don't let haters take you down. Stay up! Trees don't hurt—smoke some when you're stressing.

-D Wayne LCRS

From The Beat: Staying focused is all good and getting legit money is right, but we seriously doubt this is what you meant. We suggest the next time you write, besides making a statement or comment, share an example that supports your thoughts, even if we agree with it or not.

Changing To Play Basketball

I like basketball, so going to get my grade up and pass high school so I can get my high school diploma so I can go to college so I can play basketball. Man, I want change my life around so I can become somebody…

-Zikay GU

From The Beat: You are already somebody, but if you follow through on your plan, you will become somebody even better.

SANTA CRUZ

Waiting

What's up Beat? It's me, Francisco again, aka, Lil' Brown Boy. Well, I'm still here in Santa Cruz Juvenile Hall, waiting for five days more, because I'm getting out from this place after two months and a half. I went to a group home and ran from it, but I got caught right away, in the same week. But it's cool because I got to do my time and get it over with so that I can be free, with hopefully no probation.

Well, my plans are to work with my cousin. And in three months I want to go to Utah to Job Corp, just to get away for some time. So, hopefully, everything goes good for me.

To all – keep your heads up and take care. I'll see you one day on the outs, or in the hood.

-Francisco

From The Beat: Sounds to us like a pretty good plan. You could write to us from Utah, you know. We love to hear about your experiences with Job Corp.

The Beach

I used to go every day to the beach, on hot days like these. When I was younger, I used to go to the beach every time I could – with my cousins, uncle, aunt and my mom. Me and my cousins would boogy board, skin board, and I would swim out as far as I could in the ocean.

-Free Swimmer

From The Beat: Those days will come again. It may take a while, but how sweet it will be. In the meantime, you have a lot of work to do. We want you to look up the word 'autodidact'. Knowledge is power. Get busy.

The Dentist Appointment

I went to the dentist today and had two fillings in my teeth, and also had two shots to get numb so I wouldn't feel the drilling on my teeth. It was a little painful, but it started to hurt more after the medicine wore off. But the nurse gave me a pill for my teeth, and now it doesn't hurt as much as it did when I was done with my appointment.

-Jay

From The Beat: Did you know that most people fear dentists? It's right up there with the fear of speaking in public.

Biggest Disappointment Is Coming Back And Forth To The Hall

My biggest disappointment is coming to MCJH (Marin County Juvenile Hall) my first time, second time, third time, and fourth time. I think if I would never, ever came the first time, I don't ever think I would have come at all. If I would have never changed up ma lifestyle, I also don't think I ever would have come here. I went from doin' good all around, like in school and stuff, to doin' good in school and tryin' to get mine.

-Young Matt

From The Beat: Sometimes things don't go as we plan things. That's why you need to be careful with the choices you make. To take back time is something impossible to do at any time, but you can become what you had in mind in coming. It is never too late to realize the things we wish to see created by our own hands. Are you down in making this happen?

I Let My Past Get To Me

The biggest disappointment in my life is letting my past mess up my future. I had let my past get to me real bad. All it did was have me end up in here and now my butt is going to placement.

-Diabla

From The Beat: So, what is next? Are you going to continue with the life as you know it, or are you going to do something about it? The past is the past and now you're living a present and tomorrow a future. What's in the future?

I think if I would never, ever came the first time, I don't ever think I would have come at all.

The Biggest Disappointment In My Life

My biggest disappointment in my life is my dad, because he promised me hella shhh an' he told me he was goin' wit' me, but he wasn't. He left my mom since I was five or six years old, but I ain't trippin', 'cause he ain't no man.

He told me that he put on his momma that he was goin' to be wit' me on my 15th birthday. He gotta keep his babies off the street, for real, you feel me?

-Lil' Foot

From The Beat: It happens that fathers, mother's too, don't know or can't deal with how much they mean to their daughters and sons, and that's a real tragedy. And it's so sad. It's hard to know how to handle his neglect. We hope you now are preparing yourself for life without him, until he proves to you that he is someone you can count on. Don't let this mess up your future. Remember that we all are born alone and alone have to succeed. You don't need him with you. There are many people who have succeeded in life without a dad and a mother. You have our hearts. What you gain from this is now you know exactly what you want for your child(ren) and what you don't want to see happen.

Do Not Judge A Book By Its Cover

I don't think you can hate someone that you don't know, because sometimes you look at people or meet them, you would think that they're mean, messed up, racist, stupid, ignorant, etc. But they end up being a whole different person. They end up being not racist, love Blacks and Latins, nice, not messed up, real smart, not ignorant, follows rules. So…I don't think you can actually hate someone that you never met yet. I think it's best to meet the person, give the person a chance, and then judge, and do not judge its book by its cover.

-Dominique

From The Beat: Thank you for being positive with this topic. Has a stranger ever looked at you and misjudged you completely, before? It's really weird when that happens. Can you give The Beat an example of when you totally misunderstood who someone was? How can we avoid judging people by their appearance?

Goin' Crazy

When I get out, I'm going so crazy. I hope I be out before Friday, 'cause you know me—that's my birthday. You see--this jail shhh messed up my whole plan, 'cause I was supposed to have a party. I'm hella mad, 'cause this shhh really just messed up my plan.

-Dar' Meisha

From The Beat: Happy Birthday, Dar' Meisha. So what's really going on? You knew your birthday was coming up and you wanted to have a party, but you messed up anyway? What's up with that? Keep yourself out of trouble, so the future doesn't include time locked up.

Crazy To Know

Here is O
Crazy to know
But for now
Just go
Wit' the flow
And keep it on the low
Fo' show
Because of my mess
Causes the distress
But I'm trying to maintain
For the best
But I lay here in my cell
To rest
From 'Frisco to the Crest
The Bay Area is known
For the craziest

-O

From The Beat: And? What is your point?

My Biggest Disappointment

The biggest disappointment of my life is being who I am. The reason for this is that my whole life, I was never good in school, I never listened and always got in trouble.

I remember my first encounter with the po pos. I was in the 3rd grade. The reason for this was killing a damned seagull. Ever since, the visits haven't stopped coming. I'm in this shhhhole for the umteenth time, and, for reals, I'm done with this lifestyle.

I'm 18 years old now—it's time to leave all dumb shhh behind.

-Cuervo

From The Beat: Damn, you've been here too many times. What is the problem? Who's pressuring you to do the things you're doing? Don't you think you've wasted a chunk of your beautiful childhood and youth in here? It time for you to bring some pride and different things into your life. If you don't change your life, you will regret not putting an end to this messed up life when you get to realize that you're old and didn't enjoyed life as you are supposed to.

I remember my first encounter with the po pos. I was in the 3rd grade. The reason for this was killing a damned seagull. Ever since, the visits haven't stopped coming.

When I

When I look at you
I can't say nothing, so I smile
When I see you smilin'
I gotta smile wit' you
When I hear yo' voice
I can't do nothin' but smile

-Diabla

From The Beat: Tell us more about the person that brings a smile to your face

I Got A Messed Up Life

I'd ride fo' my homies
I'd die fo' my homies
I'd steal fo' y'all
I'd kill fo' y'all
But I don't wanna see y'all
In the hall
Wastin' you' life
What's gonna happen in a few years
Y'all actin' real dumb
Do you wanna live life like a bum?
Do the right thing

-Your homie

From The Beat: Forget about them and start worrying about yourself. You are the one who counts in YOUR OWN LIFE. This is your life you're living? You're not a guardian angel. You're a human who needs to take care of your own life. Forget about them. They don't care about you? Do any of your friends out there write you?

Slug & Hollister Demon: A Conversation

HD: So Slug, this is my last group of The Beat Within.
Slug: Yeah, that's what you think. I'm really gonna kidnap you and keep you in the art closet. I really don't want Hollister Demon to go. Who else am I gonna eat hot Cheetos with a gallon of lemon juice with? Man…
HD: I am sorry Slug, but it's time for me to go home on Monday after my party. I have been here for year today, and there's no way you are going to keep me in the art closet.
Slug: Well, whatever. When you make your CD debut I'ma be in it. Singing this: "Yo, yo, yo, my name Valley-O, walking down da street like a mashed potato." I'll be seein' this one on da hills o' Hollister soon, speeding like a demonic rocket
HD: Yeah, you funny Slug. I'll remember you and give you a shout out on my first CD called "Back From Dead." See you soon, ASAP.

-Hollister D & Slug

From The Beat: Congratulations, Demon! We will miss your contributions to The Beat, but we'll manage without you, knowing that your life is on a better path. We know it's hard for you, Slug, saying good-bye to someone so special, but your time will come. So, don't tear Hollister up little Demon, and good luck!

Moms Is My Biggest Disappointment

Hey wat it do Beat? It's yo' homegirl Lil' Skizz writing to you again this week about my biggest disappointment. My biggest disappointment in my life is that my parents, especially my mom, is on the run and still usin' crystal meth. Another one is 'cause she introduced me to meth and I got hella addicted to it. Now I'm in rehab. I get hella cravings for it but I hope the best for her.

-Lil' Skizz

From The Beat: We can understand how you would be really disappointed in your mom who didn't act like a mom at all. But the important thing is that you are working on your own issues. Until you get yourself strong and healthy, you can't be of help to anyone else. Your mom can only change herself, as you can only change yourself. Keep working!

Disappointed In Myself For My Sister

9-vole Beat? I've been up to nothin' lately, jus' been thinkin' of my lil' sis' and how I can help her by helping myself over here.

Well, the topic I am writing on is about my biggest disappointment in life. My disappointment in life is my lil' sister getting locked up! I am not just disappointed in her, but in myself, 'cause I've been locked up and I showed her the wrong way to go.

But, you guys are right about that it can bring good accomplishment in the long run. I am not going to beat myself up, and I am going to get something out of dis. Forget my boyfriend 'cause dat's jus' bringin' me down and giving me drama.

I want to thank ya Beat. Dis homegirl is out. So I got to go. Alrato

-Smokey

From The Beat: Maybe you let your sister down and maybe your sister let herself down. Either way, you are right that you have to accomplish something good in your life for those who look up to you to want to accomplish something in theirs. So what we like best about this piece is that you clearly understand that the best way to help your sister is to help yourself. (And you can do that best by letting that negative influence of your boyfriend disappear into the past.) It sounds to us like you're on a new path, and a good one, so The Beat wants to thank you!

Where have you been & where are you going?

Well Beat, I have been here at PSK for a year today — 8/11/06 — and today is my last day with the Beat Within. I am going home on Monday 8/14/06, back to San Benito County where I live. It was nice knowing The Beat Within, and the workers that come work with us at PSK. Thanks Roy and Will. See Ya Later

-Hollister D

From The Beat: We hope you have the best of luck, HD, and that you remember all that you have learned here. There are so many temptations out there that you haven't had to face in a while, so it will require strength and determination to keep your eyes on the prize. We have enjoyed having you in these workshops, and we wish you every success in the world!

. . . jus' been thinkin' of my lil' sis' and how I can help her by helping myself over here.

Real Live Issues

I got a talent to speak my mind.
No mo' hiding behind anybody.
I'm wide open now. I'm lost but now found.
I'ma still hold it down
for my ninjas dat's tryna get papa please no mo' hatas
I had enough of dat
Don't y'all understand yo' shhh is wack
Always been told
don't knock the next person's shhh until you tried it
I tried it and you ninjas is actors and always backwards
I hate being stuck, stuck in a hole
My mind is wondering tryna think my next move
Not be a dumb foo', stuck in a pot
Weed was my name, manipulating was my game
Smoking me up, using you for fame
Jus' a lost girl living in fame

-Lil' Zillah

From The Beat: It sounds like you're unstuck. So now that you see yourself crawling out of that hole, where will your feet be taking you? It worries us a lot when you announce that you're going to "hold it down" for your paper-chasing homies, because we know where that paper chase leads. Don't make the mistake of thinking you can do just a little of your old life and not fall back into it. It's like pregnancy: you either are or you're not.

To My People

What it do Beat? It's Lil' Zillah. I'm jus' letting all my people know, we all been through some tough stuff. But damn, we all can do it.

I'm in a rehab. I never thought I would be sent so far away, but it's coo' because I'm in the process of getting my shhh together. So to all, keep yo' head up and stay strong. Don't count the days. It really takes longer. Just think about all the positive things you can do when you get out. I'm out with that

-Lil' Zillah

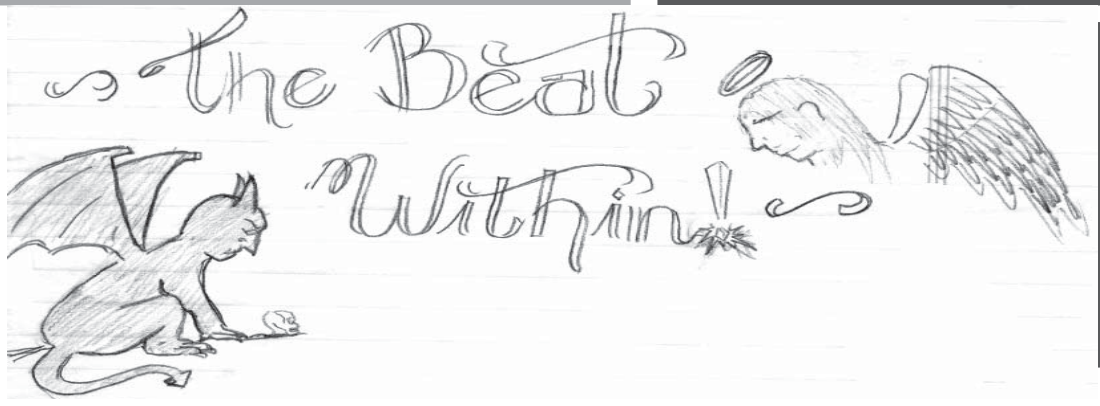
From The Beat: Moving forward to get your act together is a major accomplishment. What are the positive things you are thinking about?

Where I'm Goin'

When I leave Walden House I'm probably gonna get put in a group home here in the City. I wanna get my GED and then go to City College. In the next year I wanna find a job so I can stay with someone and pay rent. I don't know what I want to do five years from now, but what I know fo' sho is I will be getting' paid cash money.

-Maya

From The Beat: If you keep with the plan you have set out for yourself — finishing your high school GED and going on to college — you will definitely be able to get paid cash money. But along with earning that money comes a lot of responsibilities you haven't had to face yet, like paying rent and bills, so you have to be realistic. That's why following through on your plan is critical.



Love And Hate

It's a thin line between love and hate.
A person you don't know
You discriminate
Love, them be cool
Have a person you always
Will care about

-Unkown

From The Beat: Have you ever crossed that thin line between love and hate? Tells us about it. (And then share your identify with the rest of us…)

CECIL WEST ***If you're into poetry and need to be inspired, then we have an enormous treat for you this week. Sent to us in one envelope that was almost busting out at the seams, we give you several poems written by our very own Cecil West. He touches on so many topics that it would take a whole page of The Beat to introduce them, so we won't do that since we must save room for the many other writers who want to be featured this week. Keep that in mind, next time you write to us Cecil because we really enjoy your writing, but would rather you send a few poems to us at a time. Well enough of what would work best for us, let's stroke this amazing poet's ego. From 'Police Brutality' to 'I'm Really Blessed' this man's heart bleeds all over these pages. It's evident with his most used lines, "It doesn't matter the skin color, in God's eyes we're all sisters and brothers." He leaves no room for discrimination or shallow judgments, for his heart refuses to hold one group in a higher light than another. If the rest of the world was as wise as this writer, we'd all have less worries and concerns. But who cares, right? He's locked up and so he must be a bad person. Wrong... some of the most compassionate and caring people are spending time behind barbed wire fences. Society's just taught us to fear them as a way to make victimizing them easier on ourselves when we have to deal with our conscience. So as you read these great poems sent to us from the Taylor Correctional Institution in Perry, Florida, keep that in mind. These beautiful creations come from someone we fear... Or at least are taught to fear. Read on and unlearn that horrible lesson.***

Then once in the crowded
Jail . . . you will find it not much
Better than the pits of hell. Staff
Infection and other diseases . . . living

I'm Really Blessed

I'm really blessed... going through
Life without any rest, so much sorrow,
Hurt, and pain... witnessing it in others
Over and over again, all the violence
And hate... of which none of us can
Escape. Men controlling this world...
With their deadly drugs. I'm really
Blessed to be here on earth... when
I've known nothing but corruption
From the day of my birth. When I
Was born my parents looked upon
Me with nothing but scorn... leaving
Me in this cold world all alone.
With nothing or no one to turn
To... now I'm looked down on because
Of some of the things I've had to do.
Only to survive... struggling to stay
Alive. Crying out with all my heart...
To the almighty God! Wondering if
He hears my prayers... and if he
Truly cares. I'm really blessed to
Still be living... and if the ones I've
Hurt has forgiven me for all the hurt,
Pain, and sorrow I've caused them over
The years... will the wounds ever heal.
I really don't know sometimes... with
All these painful thoughts running through
My mind. Sometimes I wonder... as
My heart is full of loneliness. There's
Been times I've wanted to die... and
Many times I've found myself crying...
From all the pain, hurt, and sorrow...
With hope that happiness will
Come tomorrow not just for
Myself... but for everybody
Else. There's so much cruelty
And hate... many call it fate
How can this be... many suffering
From drugs, money, and
Material things. Kids being born
With disease of all kind... many
Living a life of crime. Sometimes
I feel to die is to rest... as I
Continue to wonder, if I'm really blessed?

To My Family And Friends

To my family and friends... I'm
Working hard to bring the madness
To an end. I know I've hurt
You all in the past... doing things
That was extremely bad. Using
Drugs, neglecting the ones
Who showed me nothing but love.
I'm truly sorry... holding on
To the hope that happiness will
Come tomorrow. I'm working on
Achieving my goals... cause
I love you all with all my heart
And soul. I'm now in a drug program
It's helping me to realize who I
Truly am. Loving, caring, and
Understanding... through the
Power of God I'll become a better
Man. Helping my sisters and brothers...
What we're up against has nothing
To do with skin color... in God's
Eye sight we're all sisters and
Brothers. To my family and friends...
In my heart it's a new beginning
I won't make any promises I can't
Keep... I can say I'm through with
The street. And that wild reckless
Life... that's filled with nothing
But strife. Over the years I've felt
So alone...through the power of
God my loneliness is gone. As I
Sit here thinking of my wife and
Kids... I'm sending much love
To my family and friends!

Police Brutality

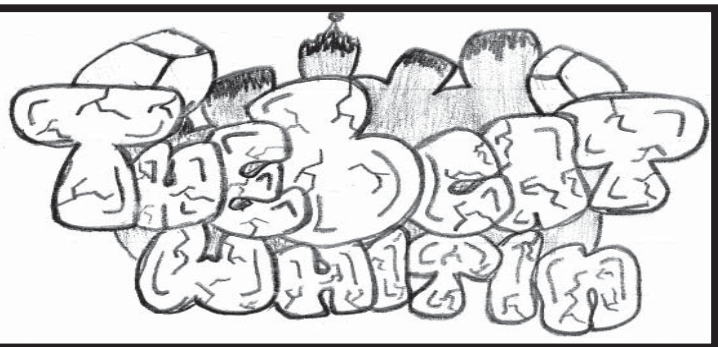
Police Brutality... it's not a dream
It's reality! When you're arrested on
The street... any false moves you'll
Be beaten! Then once in the crowded
Jail... you will find it not much
Better than the pits of hell. Staff
Infection and other diseases... living
With someone who's constantly scratching
And bleeding! Than you have to
Put up with corrupt officers who
Upholds the law... and these
People have many flaws! They
Are cruel, mean, and hateful...
Some are extremely racist! They
Will lie on you in your face... and
Extremely quick to use the mace.
Than you are sent to the department
Of corrections. And the abuse is
Not any less. In fact it's worse, they
Have license to kill... and most institutions
Do it at will. And most inmates
Have become snitches... some even
Wear panties like witches! When they
Have problems... they run to the C.O.
To solve them. Than you become a
Target for verbal abuse... being
A model inmate is useless! You'll
Be lucky to make it out alive...
From the abuse you can't walk away
Nor hide! So ask yourselves if
You want to be in a place like
This... where there's a strong
Possibility you can come up
Missing! I'm sharing with
You reality... cause the system
Is full of police brutality!

Hell On Earth

Hell on earth and it's gonna
Get worse... it's been this
Way from the time of you
Birth. Men killing men seeking
Glory... yes, life can
Be a very sad story. It's what
Some call fate. Something
None of us can escape! Kids
Being born with diseases
Of all kind... it's been pure
Hell from the beginning of
Time. Drugs controlling women
And men fate... greed
Causing and generating hate.
Men selling their manhood
For cash or crack...
Something you could never
Get back. Women selling their
Bodies and souls... in a world
That can be extremely cold. Walking
The street night and day...
As we all know many become
Slaves. Trapped in a world of
Addiction... knowing there's
A possibility they will soon come
Up missing. In a grave, jail or
Prison cell... which can turn out
To be pure hell. Friends turning
Friends on to deadly drugs...
Makes you wonder sometimes
Where is the love. Mothers
And fathers losing their kids,
Because of their life styles
And some of the things they've
Did. Politicians making and
Breaking laws to keep people
In prison. Locking thousands
Up at will! Many are placed
On probation and will soon
Be in a prison bed for violations
Many suffer from greed, money,
And material things. This is
Reality and not a dream. Factories
Manufacturing poisonous toxics,
Polluting the air and politicians
Really don't care! Causing cancer
And other diseases. Millions
Suffering from unmistakable
Greed! It's all about the dollar
Bill... To hell with wholesale
Killings! They even allow tons
Of heroin and cocaine to enter
The United States, which cause
Corruption that none of us can
Escape! We will be touched one
Way or another... and it has
Nothing to do with skin color
In God's eyesight we're all
Sisters and brothers. Open your
Eyes and you'll see the truth
In my words... and that there
Will always be hell on earth!

We will be touched one
Way or another . . . and it has
Nothing to do with skin color
In God's eyesight we're all
Sisters and brothers.

CECIL WEST (CONT.)



Sandi Gal

Sandi Gal, Sandi Gal, where are
You now... I gotta have you
Back somehow. I lay here with
Visions of your beautiful face
Knowing no other women could
Take your place.
Sandi Gal, Sandi Gal, I think of
All the beautiful times we've
Shared... knowing within my
Heart I'll always care. Wanting
You back in my life... in my
Heart you'll always be my beautiful
Wife. Treasuring all the
Times we've made love... you
Purring like the morning dove.
All the time I've kissed your
Beautiful lips while caressing
Your lovely body with my finger
Tips. Looking into your beautiful
Eyes... desire setting my blood
On fire... while you unfold in my
Warm embrace like a beautiful flower.
Sandi Gal, Sandi Gal, where are
You now... I gotta have you
Back somehow. I lay here with
Visions of your beautiful face...
Knowing no other woman can take your place.
Sandi Gal, Sandi Gal, I feel so
Much love in my heart for you...
Expressing myself through this
Song I must do. Wondering if
I ever cross your mind... do
You ever dream of me at times
And all the beautiful times we've
Shared... my beautiful wife one
Day soon I'll be there. To hold
You in my warm embrace once
Again... until then I'm only
Half a man. The love in my
Heart runs extremely deep...
Once I have you back my life
Will be complete. Right now a part
Of me is gone... a cast soul without
A home. In a world that's
Extremely cold... my beautiful
Wife I love you with all my heart
And soul.
Sandi Gal, Sandi Gal, where are
You now... I gotta have you
Back somehow. I lay here with
Visions of your lovely face...
Knowing no other woman could
Take your place.
Sandi Gal, Sandi Gal, I'm taking
It slow... only you my beautiful
Wife can give me hope.
I love you, Sandi Gal.

CECIL WEST (CONT.)

How Can I?

How can I just walk away...
When I think of you my beautiful
Wife night and day. How can
I forget about all the beautiful
Time we've shared... when I know
Within my heart you truly cared.
And you always will be my beautiful
Wife... even though I continue
To live a life filled with strife!
How can I say goodbye... when
I find myself awaken from a deep
Sleep with tears of pain running
From my eyes. With visions of
Your beautiful face... knowing
No other woman could ever take
Your place. How can I have turned
To drugs... neglecting the one
I truly love. Running the street
Day and night...with a desire
Only to get high. Knowing I'd end
Up in jail... and possibly a prison
Cell! Not being in the right state
Of mind... resulting to a life of
Crime, suffering, heartache, sorrow,
And pain... seeking someone
Or somewhere to place the blame,
Now I'm alone and by myself
And it's truly heartfelt! Now
As I think of all the times I've
Made my wife cry... I continue
To ask myself the same question
Over and over again,
How can I?

To Walk Alone

To walk alone... a wanderer
Without a home. Not caring if
I live or die... sometimes
If find myself crying. Cause
Of lost love... now I live
The life of a street thug!
Selling myself as well as
Others... not giving a
Damn about skin color!
Using dugs to kill the pain
In my heart... as I cry
Out to the almighty God!
Feeling as though he can't hear
My prayers... wondering if
He truly cares. Cause of all
The suffering and hate I see
In this world... diseases killing
Off many beautiful boys and
Girls! Friends turning friends
On to drugs... as I continue
To ask myself, where is the love?
As I walk alone seeing this
Night and day... knowing
Within my heart there's a better
Way! But I've been hurt to the
Point I really don't care... and
We all know life isn't fair!
Politicians only think of money
And power... as crime rate
Continues to go up by the hour!
No one is thinking about their
Souls... as death continues to
Take its toll! Sister against
Sister, brother against brother
Some even strike out at their
Own mothers! This world
Is mean and truth is it makes
Me sad. But I'm only one person
Just as we all know it's gonna
Get worse. One day soon I'll
Find me a home... until then
I will continue to walk alone.

Color! We must come together And encourage one another!

To Make A Change

To make a change we must
Change people, places, and things
Addicts have sent the sorrow,
Hurt, suffering, and pain... yet
We go back to it over and over
Again. Not wanting to leave
Our so-called friends behind...
Turn back the hands of time
In your mind. To the days you
Sold your body only to get
High... knowing that once
You catch AIDS you'll soon
Die. All the times you've
Allowed sexual abuse... cause
Of addiction and drug use!
All the times you've hustled
The street on the grind...
Resulting to a life of crime!
Suffering from greed, drugs
Money, or material things.
For years many have lived in
A world filled with strife...
Most of them will be thugs
For life, which is not all bad...
It depends on how you choose
To get your cash. Many thugs have
Moved on to rap, write, and
It's all good... spitting lyrics
About the 'hood. There's a lot that
Go unsaid... on how easy it is
To end up dead. And how many
Are headed for self destruction...
Many end up in jail or
A prison cell of they're lucky!
I've watched young women
Walk the street turning
Tricks... selling their selves and
Sucking on shhh. For hours at a
Time... getting high is
The only thing on their minds!
Then you got addicts following
Them around looking for a
Hit... after she's sold herself
and sucked a trick! Then
Many go for days without
Food... hanging out in the
Slums of the hood! Knowing
They could go to jail at any
Time... getting high is the
Only things on their mind!
It's as if they're in a daze...
Addictions has made them
A slave! Think about it
My brothers and sisters... when
You're gone someone will
Miss you. But they can't bring
You back... the lyrics
That I spit is nothing but
Facts! What we're up against
Has nothing to do with skin
Color! We must come together
And encourage one another! In
God's eyesight we're all sisters
And brothers!
I've seen brothers sell their
Manhood for crack... that's
Something you could never get
Back! I've seen addicts turn
People on who never used drugs
And I ask myself, where is
The love? Now I'll ask y'all
Where is the love... gangstas,
Pimps, players, and hustling thugs.
Think about the lives you touch
Every time you sell someone's
Mother or father some dope...
Causing some helpless kid to
Lose hope. My brothers and sisters
Every time you make a sale... you're
Making someone's life a living hell.
Not just the person you're selling
To... someone's mother, father, sister,
Or brother. My brothers and sisters
Nothing never stays the same... it's
Time for all of us to make a change!

United We Stand

Untied we stand… let's come together
And do all we can… we're headed
For a tragic end! Destroying a
Nation with crystal meth and crack
Cocaine! United we stand sending
Out a positive message to women
And men… it was written from
The very beginning. All the racism,
Drugs, and hate… it's something
None of us can escape… it's what
People call fate! Children being born
With all kind of diseases… men
And women suffering from greed!
Drugs, money, and material things…
Brothers and sisters this is reality
And not a dream! Family and friends
Introducing loved ones to deadly drugs…
Stop and ask yourselves where is
The love? Women selling their bodies
And souls… this world can be extremely
Cold! Our nation is at war
And war is a very sad story… men
Killing men seeking glory. Addiction
Is helping to spread that deadly
Disease AIDS… when you die you're
Only a chapter to another page. Tons
Of heroin and cocaine enters the
United States… it's controlling many
Women, men, boys, and girls' fate!
Many end up in jail… and soon
Find themselves in a prison cell!
Our nation is controlled by powerful
Men… which is headed for a
Tragic end. These men are blinded
By greed… and don't give a
Damned about you and me! Building
Prisons all over this nation…
Placing millions on probation!
The Judicial System is a billion
Dollar industry… it's all about
Ben Franklin and In God We Trust!
Brothers and sisters will sell the poison
To their own mothers… the lyrics
I'm spitting has nothing to do with
Skin color! It's about that dollar
Bill… our government even justify
Wholesale killings. Calling it was
For one reason or another. Wake
Up my sisters and brothers! Our kids
Are the future and we're history…
What the future holds is only a
Mystery. We have a war on drugs…
We must come together and show
Our neighbors some love. We can't
Stop fate… but we can stop hating!
And lend a loving hand… take heed
To the lyrics united we stand!

CECIL WEST (CONT.)

It's Like A Dream

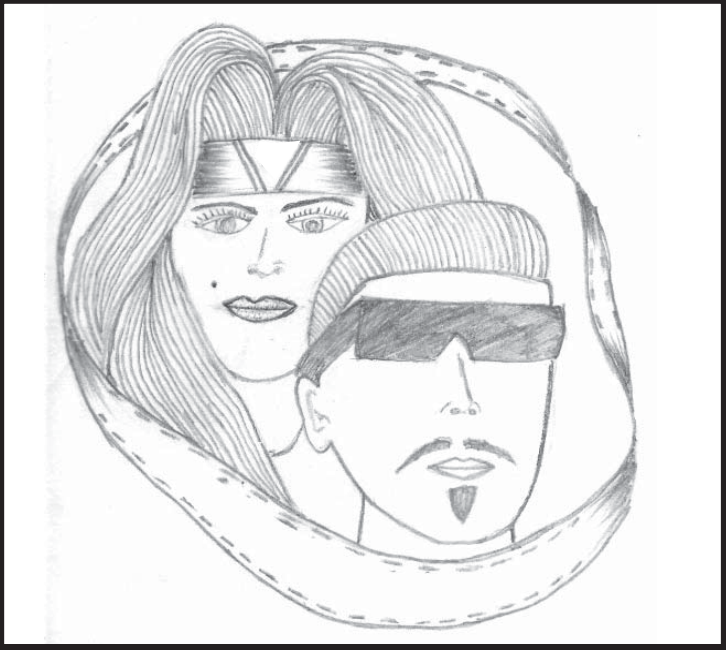
It's like a dream as I stood back
Watching the sun go down…in-
Mates lining up and standing around
Being searched as they go
Through the gate… CO's in control
Of their fates. As I stood watching
This unfold before me… I felt an
Ache in my heart that runs extremely
Deep. Wondering how could
I be so willingly give up my freedom
Over and over again… only to
Be locked up and sometimes have
To wear chains. Modern day slavery…
It's because we've been letting drugs
Money, and material things control
Our fate. As I stood there I thought
Of all the brothers in the program
Modality… praying we all wake
Up and face reality. That this is
No life… living in a world full
Of strife. Some of their CO's will
Lie right in your face… and
Extremely quick to use the mace.
And will beat you to death for a
Little of nothing… wake up my
Sisters and brothers. We must
Dig deep within our inner self
'Cause we're all we have left. It
Will take us as individuals to
Make the change… forget 'bout
The street, drugs, and gang-banging
'Cause it's the reason we're here…
Running them streets with no
Fear. For the first time I stood
Back looking at my surrounding…
Inmates and CO's in brown. It's
Like a dream I'm waking up from
And I realize I'm not alone. I
Have my brothers who's working on
Change to draw strength from
Through my pen my six brothers you'll know
That you're not alone. We must draw
Strength from one another… it
Doesn't matter the skin color! We
Must stand as a team…once you
Wake up you'll realize, it's like a dream!

We must draw
Strength from one another . . . it
Doesn't matter the skin color!

On Going Struggle

Ongoing struggle… we must wake
Up my sisters and brothers. The lyrics
In this poem has nothing to do with
Skin color… in God's eyesight
We're all sisters and brothers. We
Must come together as a whole…
Speaking out against the corruption
Boldly. Our kids are being touched
By all the violence and drugs so
Let's come together through love.
Most
Of us have lived for money, material
Things, and drugs… living the
Life styles of street thugs. This is
Touching our kids… the corrupted
Life styles we live. Most of us want
Change… so we must change people,
Places, and things. We have friends
And loved ones living a life of crime…
We must move on and leave them
Behind. It will hurt for you to do
this…
but we must become positive role
Models for our kids. They are the
Future as we all know… so we
Must let the old ways go. And face
The fact that we as adults is a part
Of history… and what the future
Holds is only a mystery. Most of
Us are fathers… fighting our
Addictions is an ongoing struggle.
So we must put our kids and loved
Ones first… in this corrupted
World. Think hard on your past…
Living for drugs, material things,
And cash. Not caring about families
Loved ones, and friends… my brothers
And sisters, the madness must
Come to an end! Greed will only
Lead to jail… and possibly a
Prison cell. At worse the grave-
Yard… so wake up from a terrible
Dream and search your hearts.
There is good in everyone… in unity
You're never alone. The creator
Created us all to be sisters and
brothers
Cause He knows life would be
An ongoing struggle!

THEE MOUSEMAN ***On these cold, foggy days here in the city, it's lovely when this next writer shines his wisdom on us. Writing from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA, Mouseman (oh, excuse us, Thee Mouseman) is always a pleasurable read. And this time is no different, as you'll see when your jaw drops in amazement reading some of the things he writes in his latest installment. He briefly introduces his two incredible pieces to us in his letter. And then he goes on to wow us in 'Night Moves,' where he uses a metaphor we're sure everyone can relate to. In describing the things he's picked up, discarded, kept, etc. he gives the example of being a little kid and putting everything in his pockets. It's a great memory — even for us and we weren't even there. Then, he closes with a shout, almost out of desperation, to his homies and himself to push people rather than letting them throw their lives away. And it probably is easier said than done in retrospect, but nevertheless it should be done as our good friend, Thee Mouseman, so wisely points out in this piece. We appreciate your words and we're positive the readers appreciate them too.***



Dear Beat Within

Sept(ember), something I think. Greeting and felicitations, here are some thoughts off the ole' melon. Which means they might be ripe and they might not! (SMILE)

Nevertheless, I thought I would send them in, I normally do not get the opportunity to write as often as I would like, but today my boss decided to not show up for work, too cool! So I thought I would write what has been on my mind echoing what the lil' folks had to say this week.

"Night Moves" is about that issue/topic you were speaking of in the last edition I read, I also wanted to take the time to personally thank all of you for printing what I had to say about various subjects, it is rare and a jewel to find you people who are willing to use the opinions of those who flew too close to the sun. (Oh that gives me an IDEA)

I am hoping and praying that I have the opportunity to send something for your offices, it is a drawing, almost poster size. I am in it and so you will find out who I am by it, but I hope you will find it in your hearts to never include in my writings who I am, or what race I am, I personally want to stay as far away from that as possible. Let's just say I am colorblind these days.

Push me, please! I am still a kid! That is my take on remembering being a kid, young! I have not learned to take a topic and speak directly to it, why because we in prison seldom say what we mean, we lead up the road slowly making sure everyone is happy and on the same trip! Safer that way, and I mean that on so many levels.

See ya' next time a bug crawls up my leg. (SMILE)

Always (HERE)

Push Me, Please! I Am Still Just A Kid!

Even at my age, (over 45) I have trouble moving the way I need to go. I mean, I just have trouble, what kind of trouble? Does it matter? Not to me it doesn't! Trouble moving is trouble moving period! Am I mistaken? Well, I'll let the Little Folks be the judge of that!

Question, if you were blazed and standing in the street where traffic could hit you. Would you want me to push you out of the way? Or just yell at you, "Hey, move it!" and hope you moved out of the street?

You might say it is your right to stand where you damn well please, true? What if you did not know that there was traffic coming down that street? What if you were standing there not wanting to get hit by a car? Or are you so far out of your mind that you do not know where you're standing and that it just might cost your life? Well I guess one of your homies will write a R.I.P for you, what will it say? Would a R.I.P in The Beat Within be enough for you, I mean is that how you want it to end?

Along the same thought, I was wondering why we say, "Rest in Peace?". What does that mean? Why is that what we feel we have to say, why does it need to be said? And is it possible to Rest in Peace, after you have been living in a war? Is it the body that is at war or the mind? Is there a difference? If someone must say, "Rest in Peace", then it sort of tends to make me think that they must not have been at peace in this life, am I reading that message correct or not?

Check this, when I was little I thought I was in the right place, (doing my thing) as it turns out, I was not just standing in the street but my dumb a** picked rush hour as the time to get stuck on stupid (breaking the law). I got smashed by the oncoming traffic (courts). Rest In Peace! None of my partners pushed me to a safe place! (DAMN PUNKS). I have been resting ever since then. Where is the love, I ain't no lame, why did they treat me like one?

Cool partners huh, they did not have enough love to push me, they just wished me to "Rest In Peace". I guess they figured I was O.K where I was at. Maybe they thought I was ready to end my life on the streets.

"Rest in Peace", is the best that we got for some. I am guilty of that shhh also. Some of the homies got butchered in this place during the race wars and I would say stuff also like, "Rest in Peace," "He was a good dude," "I liked his style," "What a shame," or some weak remark like that. I say weak cause I thought of those guys as my comrades, but I did not think enough of them to push their a**es out of harms way. It just seems to me that we do not have much to say when someone is killed. Or maybe it was because I was not enough of a true friend to push them out of the way, does that make me a coward, letting the homies die, rather than pushing them out of the way? I am asking you lil' folks. What would you call me if I let you stand in a place I knew you were going to get smashed sooner or later by traffic?

My friends who were killed in prison, we were tight. At visiting I used to kick it with their families. They were considered friends. I wonder if they had thought, "What happened Mouseman, why did you not see this coming and push them out of harms way?" Why did I let my friends mess off their lives here in this cubed abyss? Maybe, at the time I did not know what a true friend really was. Maybe, then maybe I did know better I just played "The Game"...

Night Moves

A tattered soul slithers towards what little sanity I have managed to keep alive. Darkness betrays me, illuminating the path to my slumbering spirit.

Who is proclaimed Keeper of my soul? Why is he laced with malice dripping from his K-9's. Heaving with a unbridled lust for revenge. Great goodness this is no Keeper, this one comes to persecute my spirit. To kill, crush and obliterate if at all possible.

Intent pure as pure can be. He is here to mortify me. Muscular arms imprison the body. I cannot move. Trapped by my own design. I must endure whatever the Keeper has conjured in this never-ending nightmare. Hallowed fangs pierce my spirit seeking engagement to memories of long past times.

Phantom you seek confrontation with a kindred spirit. Memory relinquished, not having the need to shake your grip anymore. No longer remembering what it was to feel love for the first time.

Keeper has won, or so he has been lead to believe.

Days of foolishness are far behind me, I may appear to treasure something and Thee Keeper may think he has taken something of great value. Yet, I have given him what was not mine to keep.

THEE MOUSEMAN (CONT.)

As a child I put many things in my pockets, bubble gum, marbles, frogs, rocks, and a few things I shall not mention. All those things have disappeared, vanishing being pushed with something new. What I have now no Keeper can take from me. I seek to hold nothing but my dignity.

Yes, yesterday's sunset was very beautiful. I look forward to what is coming, I don't know what it is but, it is something different, and as I now see it, as a child "different", is what went in my pockets. And it seemed things were always falling out. That never saddened me; it just left room for something new. I just needed a reminder on that.

It is normal to sleep, it is normal to dream, it is normal that memories fade, it is also normal to remember nothing will last forever in this world. What tomorrow brings is what I am waiting to greet. With the understanding that what I do today illuminates the path for what is going to visit me tomorrow.

In this dream Thee Keeper is just what he appears to be a phantom, and a phantom does not exist unless you allow it to. I am old enough to know the Boogie Man! The only thing that is going to come and get me in the middle of the night is the poor decisions I made in the daytime!

AARON MEHRINGER

Our Beat family grows every time one prisoner hands this amazing magazine to another. In this case, 20-year-old Aaron Mehringer has discovered us, and hopes to be able to turn around the lives of our young writers as his life was turned around. Aaron has found one of the most universal paths to a new life, and that is religion. In his case, it is the message of Jesus that has inspired him to change from a gangster and meth addict, to a man dedicating his life to the salvation of others, and thus his own salvation. Aaron introduces himself to us through this brief description of his path to prison (with freedom around the corner) at his temporary home at C.S.P. Solano.

My Redemption

My name is Aaron Jay Mehringer. I am currently an inmate at CSP Solano. I've been locked up since July 16th of 2004. My release date is January 18th 2007. I'm only a little over six months to being home free.

I was born on November of 1985. I'll be 21 years old upon my release from prison. I just recently gave my heart and life over to God and accepted his beloved son Jesus Christ as my personal savior. Just the other day I was talking with a Christian brother of mine and he turned me onto your magazine and he explained to me how you guys work.

I would like to be of help to these kids if I can! As you know I'm only 20 years old right now and I've put myself through straight hell for most of my teenage years. As a young child, I come from a broken up family. Mom was addicted to meth and dad was in prison. My grandmother took me from my mom when I was around five years old. Mom didn't even show up to the first court date for child custody. My grandmother was granted full guardianship.

My grandmother is a very beautiful person and she means the world to me. She tried sooo hard with me but I was a very confused child and my confusion made me outa control. My trouble first started with fighting in school and fighting was something I was very good at, so I thought it was a cool thing to do. This led to hangin' with the wrong crowds.. And then before I knew it, I was getting jumped into a gang. I was getting jumped into a Mexican gang as a white boy.

Being a white boy in the group meant I was always provin' myself. I felt that whether I was white or Mexican I needed to be the baddest of them all. My desire for a tough guy rep. only got me locked up.

Being in the gang kinda filled something in my heart that was missing. The reason why I say that is because it didn't really take anything's place in my heart, but what it did was take my mind of my heart's cries and my heart' desire for affection from a family. I was confused and becoming very troublesome. Found myself spending a lot of time in juvenile correctional facilities.

One thing led to another and before I or anybody else knew it, I became very interested with the life of methamphetamines. I started using it something fierce, and was also selling it to support my habit and keep money in my pocket. So at that time I was gang affiliated and using and selling drugs. The gangbanging only lasted so much longer because I became so sucked into the drug scene that all my time was pre-occupied. I no longer needed my gang because the drugs took care of all my problems. It really wasn't hard for me to leave the gang because they knew I was down for mines and that if they ever needed me I would always be there.

They also knew that I was on some new trip and not to get in my way because once I put my mind to something, and my heart was backing my mind up, there was no holding me back. So I started selling meth on a very high level, I'm not gonna get into any details. I'm truly not proud of my past choices or the past life I lived. But one thing I do know, and that is that God has a plan for each and every one of us. I now am found and no longer confused or lost. I now can see the light and I know that God wants me to help ones that are as confused as I once was! I at one time was in juvenile hall and every time I came out of my cell I was fighting because of colors and numbers. I at one time didn't care about anything but my daily fix and how much money I could make in one day in all the wrong ways.

Now today I sit in Solano State Prison due to my making money in all the wrong ways. The best thing that every happened to me was the day that I accepted God and his son Jesus Christ into my life. Today my mom has five years clean and sober and has blessed me with my first sibling, I have a healthy little two-year-old brother that is my best friend. The dad that was always in prison I told you about, I found out he was not my real father when I was in my first teen year. Even though he wasn't there for me all that much, I still loved him dearly and thought he was my dad for all those early years of my life. This made me even more angry and even more confused as a kid. Today I know that that was a blessing in disguise because I have a very big and beautiful family in New Hampshire that love and support me to the fullest. I've had many people tell me "Aaron all you have to do is find yourself and then you'll be great inspiration for many people."

I wrote this to you so that you can understand a little bit of my background and where I come from and where I'm at today. It would really mean a lot to me if I could write some of these kids and give them some comforting words. I was once in their shoes and it won't be hard for me to put myself back in their shoes, now that I can see. I know the mistakes I made and I know what advise and comfort would've helped me, and that's what makes me want to help and write these kids, I want to give advice to the old me. Inspiration and dedication is all it takes. I plan on going to juvenile halls and talking to kids when I get out as well. I would also like to be a subscriber to the mag..

That you for giving me the time.

THE BEAT WITHOUT ..... www.thebeatwithin.org VOLUME 11.33 ..... PAGE 50

ABISAI GARCIA ***Writing from Pelican Bay State Prison in Crescent City, CA, we give to you a very dear ol' friend of ours — a friend we haven't heard from in a while. With a letter to the founder that is extremely touching (we didn't publish because it sounded kind of personal), he also sent us a piece that had no title but spoke volumes. We titled it 'Cultural Liberation' because in his piece he talks about how our country seems to do all it can to pull one away from his or her own culture. In the school system they teach American History in almost every grade we go to. However, we all know America is a melting pot for many different cultures. This writer's argument is how can a society who was built on the blood of other cultures be so quick to keep those very same cultures hidden from their people. Furthermore, he goes on to almost demand that we educate ourselves about our culture because without knowing where we came from, we can never tell where we're going. It's an idea that should be on a platform, so here we are hoisting it up in our Beat pages. It was a pleasure to read your writing as always and we look forward to hearing from you again soon. Please don't be a stranger.***

Cultural Liberation

The fascist bondage that engulfs a subjugated minority group's everyday lifestyle can only be liquidated by the vital obtaining of education and knowledge of one's roots and history. The historical accounts evident in one's roots help depict and unfold the naked truth behind its people's continuous suppression. It is a key fragment missing in the achievement of self-awareness. Ignorance must be penetrated as it is one of the many tools that aid the social, economic, and political oppression of a people that have been stripped of not only these trio, but also of their "cultural identity." This loss ensures the despicable assimilation into an imperialist regime that exploits at home and overseas for it's avaricious capital gain! Education and awareness is to be evolved around how is and has one been oppressed, who benefits from this oppression, and what measures must be taken in order to achieve social, economic, and political liberation.

For this, one must study in full analyzation the failures and triumphs of past attempts. Furthermore, obtaining self-awareness cannot be only restricted and limited to its own race, but exhibit similar diligence and study awarded to its own history to the history of other oppressed cultures. This shall make it undeniable as to what/who has been the common oppressor to these people including one's own.

Our continuous struggle for liberation shares one enemy it is therefore logical that our alliance is necessary in overthrowing an imperialist ogre, keen awareness of one's own cultural background serves toward the mental emancipation of demoralizing propaganda infiltrated conscience. As well as it presents the key to unlocking the vile truth behind factious speeches and lies submitted to a society that conforms to any "seemingly acceptable explanation." The persecuted have at many times been appeased by false promises delivered with the intention of masking numerous atrocities committed against them. Hence, misinterpretation of current world affairs is common as the enemy is believed to be none other than fellow oppressed people vociferating their insubordination to a fascist dictatorship. As history will tell us a group that exercises awareness of current affairs will show a much stronger resistance than one that is made completely unaware of the social injustice millions have been entrenched into. The formers intelligence and understanding of the malicious exploitation methods is less susceptible to being manipulated, given to the fact that they have seen through the smoke screen into the factual motives of propaganda lies. The masses of the downtrodden humanity will remain exploited and oppressed if social awareness continues being neglected. They either don't want to be exposed to the truth and have been channeled to believe that assimilation holds the key to unlocking them from their chains. Or have involuntarily left any awareness of their situations behind due to the lack of resources presented in their environment.

The refutable ignorance of the former group leads them to perceive that a rightist reformist approach is the only credible method of achieving liberation. What they have failed to see is that this path ensures the loss of their cultural identity given to the assimilation and acceptance to the culture of the society that sees them as being innately inferior in the first place. They capitulate and compromise to the demands of a wholly fascist society in hopes of abandoning the oppression their own people's culture have had to endure for hundreds and thousand of years. They then desperately yearn for the admittance into the culture of the 'status quo' that they in turn become oppressors of the people who share their skin complexion and historical background to display their eagerness and loyalty to assimilate. They have fallen prey to the bigoted ideology of white chauvinism. Which makes them perceive the economic inefficiencies of the famished as truly justifiable if it works to the purpose of their own personal capital gain. Hence, they ignore the fact that the people they oppress hold a mirror reflection of the person they have once been prior to their sycophant climb of the "Social Ladder"

Unlike the social prominence hunger of the appeasable group, this other side of people's ignorance is due in part to the meager existence of social education in the environment of their communities. As schools in the educational system tend to teach people "what to think not how to think." The educational system is more prone to present a patriotic approach to their teachings rather than allowing the cultural blossom of a student. This in part leads to believing ones' culture is inferior to the patriotic chauvinism of society, which will then lead to the assimilation view of the repugnant rightist reformist group. Absence of the proper education in a community serves to continue the suppression of its inhabitants. The inhabitants thus are raised to regard their social status as nearly a natural standard of the way things are supposed to be and the situation as having no remedy. They accept the social ills placed on them merely as "the cycle of life" and seek no further explanation as to the reason and motives behind their unfortunate predicaments. And failure to recognize oneself as a vital player in our liberation constitutes the repugnant definition of ignorance. This failure to recognize the potential and power in one's mobilization towards achieving permanent change can be attributed to the classroom's systematic molding of the student into appeasable capitalist commodities. This is well stated by Noam Chomsky in his book, "Chomsky on Mis-Education" schools are institutions for indoctrination and for imposing obedience. Far from creating independent thinkers, schools, have always, throughout history, played an institutional role in systems of control and coercion.

An enthusiastic approach towards self-enlightenment of the negative and positive context of society should be prominent and awarded through diligence as it serves the emancipation of the mind and everything attributed to it. Contextualizing our history and society, past and present works as a vital organ in dismantling the social, political, and economic suppression heavily weighted upon us. Only the downtrodden as an educated collective can emancipate themselves from systematic rule. "La Raza Unida, Jamás Será Vencida!" (The people united, will never be defeated)

They accept the social ills placed on them merely as "the cycle of life" and seek no further explanation as to the reason and motives behind their unfortunate predicaments. And failure to recognize oneself as a vital player in our liberation constitutes the repugnant definition of ignorance.

Imposter

SCORPION ***This piece is by a long time Beat Within reader, turned staff. Scorpion was recently hired after his stint in Marin County Juvenile Hall, and is now pumping out stories like nobodies business. It's a pleasure to finally have him in our office because for the longest time many of us knew who he was without him knowing. He's always been a great poet, thought provoking writer, and just an all out 'stand-up guy,' so having him around makes life at The Beat a little easier, a little more inspiring, and not to mention, a bit more positive. In the following story, a boy wakes up to find his femininity next to him in bed. Follow him as he tries desperately to figure out what has happened. It's a brilliant piece from a more brilliant young man. Good work Scorpion, and keep 'em coming.***

I woke up this morning to the sound of my grandpa washing dishes and singing. I groggily opened my eyes and glanced at him through cracked eyelids. I tried this particular morning to croak "good morning" as usual, but my lips didn't budge! I tried again with the exact same results. Now I was completely awake and clawing at my face with both hands trying to scream or say something. I looked at my grandpa with a horrific pleading look and he just stared right past me at something on the bed next to me.

I turned my body around barely observing that I was incapable of making any sounds at all. Even my bed sheets seemed to stay put as I slithered out from under them. It wasn't until I noticed this fact that I noticed something else, my hand was passing through the sheets instead of making them move. I was no more than a spirit in a world of solid. All at once I remembered that there was somebody on the bed as the sheets moved and I saw a strangely familiar face pop out from under the covers. We stared at one another until she looked away like I didn't even exist! I knew not who she was, but rather what she was. I looked at her once more, and my jaw slowly extended like a snake digesting a large morsel. This woman in front of me was my femininity, it must be!

Black hair and dark green eyes she was what I always thought I would look like as a woman. I had imagined myself as a woman before and could never fully develop the image, but here she, or I, or it, was right in front of me! I approached the girl I wanted to be and she sprang to her feet and walked right through me like nothing was there. I sat in silence on the floor in front of the T.V. and watched the scene unfold in front of me. My grandpa leaving for work, my bed being made by Sarah, (That is what I wanted my name to be, If I ever became a girl) She took a shower and put on my deodorant and my clothes and stepped into my shoes. I followed her through the house watching her put my wallet into her pocket, my sunglasses on her face, and generally be me.

I looked down and realized that as she put clothes on, they appeared on my body at the same time. I was glad because even though you're invisible, you still don't want to be walking around in the nude. I followed her outside and waited with her at the bus stop, apparently she also had the same job as me because she entered the same bus that I had been on the previous morning to go to work.

I was dumbstruck with envy at this imposter taking my life over and doing it so calmly, without saying a single word to my grandpa, or anybody else. I followed Sarah all the way to my work and then into the office. She walked into the office, with my headphones, blaring my music, sat down at an empty desk, and started typing my thoughts! The biggest surprise of them all though, came while I was watching this part of me do my work for me. I had just gotten into the second story she had written when a voice behind me said, "Scorpion!" and I turned around to find one of my co-workers Perry, looking at Sarah expectantly. I was about to try and speak again for the third time today but before I could utter an attempt, Sarah, in my voice, replied with what I was about to say, "Whassup?"

I was stupefied, and the plot thickened when Perry asked her about working out next Friday like we had planned. I would have laughed if I could move my lips, Her? The skinny little girl with my voice lifting weights, what are you thinking Perry? But then I thought, maybe he sees me and I only see Sarah? What if she really is taking over my life and all I can do is shadow her? Before I could form an answer in my brain, I heard Sarah bellow, "Sure, I'll come in at about three?" And Perry responds, "Cool."

I felt for some cigarettes in my pockets and came up with the brand new pack I had bought that morning. I took one out of the pack and put it in my mouth. A scream startled me so that I dropped my smoke to the floor. I turned to see an intern with her mouth hanging about as wide as mine was this morning, pointing at a smoke on the floor next to mine. I picked mine up and simultaneously the other floated up to the same level.

"There it goes again!" She screamed and suddenly it all clicked into place, Whatever I do to my possessions in my space happens to hers also… I picked up the cigarette and lighter and lit up, still sitting on the floor put it in my mouth and inhaled. I smiled smugly as the lit cigarette that everyone else could see did the same, except it went to her pursed lips and she sucked in. The boss at my worked came over and asked what she was doing and as she opened her mouth I thought as hard as I could about the word "banana" and then she said it, the word Banana. Hmm… This could be fun… I tried again, this time with a more inappropriate word that rhymes with the word "duck". "What did you say to me?" my outraged boss exclaimed as his face busted into a brilliant shade of magenta.

"I…I…I'm sorry," Sarah stammered. "I was just angry because, uh, I…dropped my cigarette! Yeah that's it, my cigarette, I've been fiending all morning and now it's all dirty. Sorry boss!" My boss's face relaxed a little which was good, because I was beginning to get the feeling that he would step on me if he could see me.

"Well don't let it happen again" he said "And put that damn cigarette out before you burn this place down!"

"Sure boss, I don't know what I was thinking" she said, watching him walk away shaking his head and muttering.

When Sarah realized what had happened and that she was not fired, she turned her head and looked at me! "What in Satan's house do you think your doing?" She said with a vein in her forehead pulsing violently.

I stared at her and then choked out, "You can see me?"

She gave me a stare like I was chewing on a stick of dynamite and said rather sarcastically, "Uh, yeah, why wouldn't I be able to see you? You're sitting on the floor of my work, smoking a cigarette." Well I wasn't expecting that.

"Uh, I don't know why, but you are the only person I've met today who can see me, (I never thought I'd say that) and I think you are my femininity."

Once again she gave me that look only this time, minus the vein that had reduced back to a small blemish on her forehead. "Do I know you?" She said, slowly running her hand through the waves of black running down to the small of her back. "Because if I don't, why are you on my floor like we're best friends?"

"Because you are my femininity!" this was starting to sound like a really bad B movie, and I was beginning to regret getting out of bed this morning.

"What the @#! are you talking about? You woke up next to me in bed this morning and I thought that if I ignored you long enough you would go away. I don't know who you are or what we did last night but I don't want to be with you. You've been stalking me all morning and now you're sitting on my floor smoking a cigarette like we're married! What is wrong with you?" She fumed, her nostrils flaring much like a stallion that has been run hard all day long under the hot sun "Well what do you have to say for yourself!"

I struggled to find the words as I looked around apologetically at the office. She, or we had attracted the attention of every single person in the building. "Well," I began slowly "Lets talk outside because people are staring at you and it's making me uncomfortable." I said.

"It's not me that they're staring at, it's you!" She said with a crazy look in her eye that reminded me of a rabid dog that bit me on my twelfth birthday. "You, they are staring at you!"

"Sweetie", I said slowly, "They can't see me. That's what I've been trying to tell you for the past ten minutes before you started yelling at everything in sight. Sarah," I said even slower than before, "Lets go outside and talk."

She followed me outside with such an exhausted look planted on her face, that I almost felt sorry for her. Okay, I did feel sorry for her, but she has to know what I know. And the sooner the better.

Once outside she turned to me and said in the most patient voice, "Okay, now explain to me one more time who exactly you are, and what you think I am to you."

I took a deep breath and started to explain my experiences starting with this morning and watching her dress when she shot towards me and our lips met hard. I brought my hands up to caress the back of her head when my mouth started to create suction that I couldn't control. I tried to pull away but when I opened my mouth, my jaw drooped lower until it was hanging down to my knees. I looked down the bridge of my nose to see what Sarah was doing but all I saw were her clothes lying in a pile on the floor and two naked female legs disappearing down my throat.

"AAAAAUUUUGGGGGGH!!!!" I screamed and clawed at my face for the second time that day trying desperately to dislodge her from my throat. All at once her legs melted and flowed down to my stomach where I felt her presence in my body like she had never left. I composed myself and swallowed a few times and waited. After I had sat there about ten minutes, I realized what I had done. I didn't want to say it out loud but I did. "I ate Sarah." A bum walking by looked at me and smiled knowingly before returning to his stroll down the street.

ALEX SHELTON ***We were first awed by this next writer's art. He was featured on a few recent Beat covers. They say don't judge a book by its cover, but with Alex's incredible artwork, we'd want you to judge our publication by looking at some of his covers. However, this is not the subject of this introduction, we just wanted to build him up before we let him explode on to our pages with these next four poems. He sent one a week to us for the month of July and since we're a little busy here at The Beat, we decided to run all of his poems at once. We hope that was okay. As for his first poem, 'If I Could Turn Back The Hands Of Time,' we wish we could turn back the hands of time, so we could've gotten this a little earlier because it would have been a great contender for our contest. Nevertheless, it's still a great poem and we suggest you read it. He goes on to describe things like his 'twisted robotic mind' and closes with our personal favorite 'Chaotic Miscalculations.' Whether it's painting pictures with images or words, this man is truly an artist. One who needs to be discovered. So if you happen to be a discoverer of sorts, please contact this man. He writes to us from Kern Valley State Prison in Delano, CA.***

The smiling angel looked up at the sad gangster and said "off the top"
Don't listen to that lop
He brought a gang of youngsters to their death with an evil skip, jump and hop

My Twisted Robotic Mind

Haphazardly I feel like my brain is a bungled mass of twisted wires
And circuits out of whack
Packin' a mac' red light green light
On sight car jacked a sixty-four, dropped to the floor,
Came around the corner and popped the door
And riddled a car with bullets galore
Accelerated to 54' or more!
Those were the days
You know the ways
Smashing on anyone toe-to-toe anxious and ready to roll
Never malfunctioning or saying "no"
With the homies on a stroll
Like a robot fresh out of the box,
Built with armor, a big heart, and sly as a fox
Remote control included with a bonus
Gun and knife at no extra cost
Tax-free and lean
Zoot suit and brim
Eyes set to dim, Bud to the rim
On a enemy hunt mode
Later to be told to the hold
Let's hit the road, full load, homies are real code, machine sold
Popping caps, hit or miss, my robotic brain is a bliss
Bank robberies, extortion, drug distribution, some awaiting execution Homeboys left the state, but for some the court set a date, Investigation
No sir, no relation, no affiliation
The F.B.I. had our description, and only the 1st edition no mercy on a gangster they created a monster
Stepping out of this robotic mind and the chaos blind
The "stop" sign is in your face with a
Capital "S" "T" "O" "P"
I crushed the remote to the "T" in prison on
A "me" number
Not a "we" number, do you see and hear the scenario? Do I need to pump it up to "stereo"
Live right or die young, so long!

Maximum-Impact

Alphabetically speaking: "D" is for devil
And "A" is for angel which for most of us are unacquainted to a righteous level

The gangster gazed upon Satan to the left
And the angel to the right
The creature with the pitchfork was an ugly sight

He looked like he was mad at the world and looked up at the stars
And thought — if only I can trick this gangster and get him behind bars

With a roll of the dice, it landed on his number "666"
He spoke first "I'll have whiskey"
"some drugs" and wild chicks

And reminded the gangster "It ain't like you got to go to work tomorrow"
"You can steal a car"
"And rob someone down at the local bar" "Cheers"

You'll be well-dressed
Never second-guessed
Let's put it to the test

The smiling angel looked up at the sad gangster and said "off the top"
Don't listen to that lop
He brought a gang of youngsters to their death with an evil skip, jump and hop

Your mother is at home crying
While this devil is looking you in your eye and lying

That booze your slingin'
Is tampering with your liver
Those drugs are burning out your brain cells the list is long for those awaiting a liver transplant giver
Ain't no such thing as a brain transplant
When your body starts to shiver

Hook-up with a decent chick, get a job, and buy a car
Or you won't get very far
What if someone stole your family's stuff
Call my bluff
It's society that's bashing the role of a gang thing
I'm not here to talk out the side of my neck
I'm not moving one inch from your shoulder so don't try to put me in check
You're the one headed for a wreck

But hey "I'm not mad at ya" gangster it's not my style
Bring it to a halt or build up your central-file
Stuck for a long while
On the phone with no one to dial

Time is running out for Satan he's trying to gain the upper hand
Reprimand
Dying in the chokehold of the quicksand
What's good for the goose is good for the gand--

The downward spiral of hell
Begging for a cup of water kiss and tell
Don't ring the bell

So I'm trying to inquire
You wanna live forever I can call God on the wire
Or suffer in the lake of fire

I'm off to visit another gangster hopefully he will "listen"
The gangster's eye started to glisten
Heart pumpin' like a piston

He had to make a decision

"D" is for death
"P" is for prison
"M" is for maximum
And "I" is for impact like a incision
An evil vision

Which part of this don't "U" understand "G"
Satan also lands on the shoulders of the gangster chicks
The one's that fell
I still have their flicks
So beware of the "666"

Chaotic Miscalculations

My soul is…
Surrounded by high voltage fences and anxious
Gun towers without delay
That,
Stand ready to pierce a man's bones
I'm here to relay
To all the youngsters
Once upon a time ago I was your age! Allow me
To flip the page…
Sometimes a young warrior's interests are gang identical
Somewhat mystical
Always critical
Riding with Satan you can't always expect a miracle!
So listen and be sensible and discreet
And let go of the hard headed defeat
I repeat! Stand on your own two feet
Our chaotic miscalculations in life and the experiences
Abound are also incomprehensible
Always in a scramble
We're only getting older and subconscious spirits
dizzy with disappointment fought
Harboring no sentimental thought
Sooner or later you're caught
You think not?
You want to be all you can be
Should've joined the army
Or USMC
Listen young "G"
Eye to eye you and me
Hear my plea
The reward is life eternity
I only have a limited vocabulary now
With enough sense to live and tell
Feeling puzzled I understand but it don't take much to remain free
Don't be like me
Another long day wasted away "G"
It's the same thing day in and day out even on my own TV
Sometimes I feel like the birds with their high-pitched
Chirping are laughing out of curiosity
At the man in the cell window staring constantly
I write this personal poem also for the lady "G"s
All you young ladies deserve better
Moms don't want no prison letter
Hear the truth displayed by The Beat Within their near and dear
The editor and crew gets things in gear
Always a good year
And now to the last note, to you
You're grown do what you want to do
Whatever happens afterwards is no concern of mine
In stride at least I know I tried
To warn the gangs entwined
I write of no allegation
I had me a girlfriend with no reputation
My own homie who I thought was true to the game was whispering sweet nothings with her behind my back
Set an example with a no slack whack
This ain't the first time this happened amongst a homie and I ain't wasting my ink
I say that with a wink
~I miscalculated~
Tried to keep my drinking a limit by the hour
The homies didn't keep count so we got stupid with the firepower
My mother smiling blandly at me and saying softly
"Be careful," "Don't stay out too late"
Homies parked down the corner, stolen car in wait
I dint care it was all about me and my lady "G" date,
But I miscalculated at high rate,
Wound up in the backseat of a police car
This was the start of my criminal career by far
Gangster from all over California ended up on a death notice section
A few more years I'm free and headed in a new direction
"No Tension!!"

ALEX SHELTON (CONT.)

Sometimes a young warrior's interests are gang identical
Somewhat mystical
Always critical

If I Could Turn Back The Hands Of Time

The clouds, which had been threatening all day spread
Out in a dense and sluggish mass of vapor
Already yielding large drops of rain against my cell window as I
Really thought to myself
For a quarter of an hour or so…
If I could turn back the hands of time
I would very swiftly re-adjust the tricky mechanisms of this
Magnificent clock
To whisper in my ear, a reality rhyme
With a loud chime
No batteries necessary
Alarming me with its mighty powers to rise and shine down
To the last second at 6 o' clock in the morning
With a flash, a crash and a loud whistle
To say: school time is in effect. Number one rule so it's out the gate by eight and don't be late
Don't worry about the 24-7
"There's some who are an inmate of the state"
End of discussion
"I would be above and beyond my fate"
I responded
I would constantly sit at my desk every weekend 'till 11 o' clock
At night
Studying my school books
Like a school boy should be doing
My videos and Playstation can wait 'cause I'd be focused on
"Graduation day"
Everyday my mother would read me a chapter or two 'cause
She would always have time for me
Every minute
Remember my son what the bible says: honor and love your
Parents and be obedient and god will bless you in your lifetime
I wouldn't have a frown upon my face
'Cause grandpa and grandma would still be alive
And all those family that
Are in a better place with God
— would be back
I wouldn't be a bad boy no more I promise you God — I really do…
I would tell my clock to remind me when it's time
To come home…
Even if he has to send the lil' yellow bird
That flies in and out of his door to snatch me up
I would kick it at Gramm's house with the lighted candles
And listening to sweet music in a perfect rapture
A lovely capture
I'd walk hand in hand even as a grown man in her garden and
Pick her a flower as we walk along
The birds singing a song and when Sunday came
How differently the day would be spent in the small church down the block
Where all my loved ones went
And the sweet smelling air stealing in at the low
Porch
And filling the building with the
Fragrances of life
The people were so neat and clean and knelt so reverently in prayer
My child like activities wouldn't be the same — like climbing up and down big trees, jumping on roofs of houses, playing door bell ditch, throwing rocks at the trains
And starting a fire I couldn't maintain
Getting scratched, cut and bruised, teasing and testing dogs giving them the blues
"If I could turn back the hands of time" I would… be happy and peaceful with a loving, respectful wife, kids never difficult
Or bad 'cause I'd make sure
They had the knowledge and wisdom of
(The world)
My house would be spacious, 5 bedrooms, a spa, and a pool, two car
Garage and all the luxuries I deserve
My whole family would be proud of me and my accomplishments in life
I would be quite a gentle man now
The clock is ticking
You know what time it is?

LAWRENCE SMITH ***Ah, to have Professor Blackmind back in our pages after a long absence is like a cold drink after a long dry spell. Welcome back, Professor! This young man discovered The Beat when he was in juvenile placement and knocked all our socks off with the beauty of his poetry and the depth of his wisdom. Like all of us, he's had both ups and downs, and is currently experiencing a little down time in the Sacramento County Jail where he wonders why our so-called leaders can lead! Welcome back, Lawrence. You've been sorely missed!***

Re-Introduction

If you do not know who I am, please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Lawrence G. Smith, but my friends and family at The Beat Within address me by my moniker Professor Blackmind. I am writing the BWO from a solitary confinement cell at Sacramento County Jail (RCCC) in Elk Grove, CA.

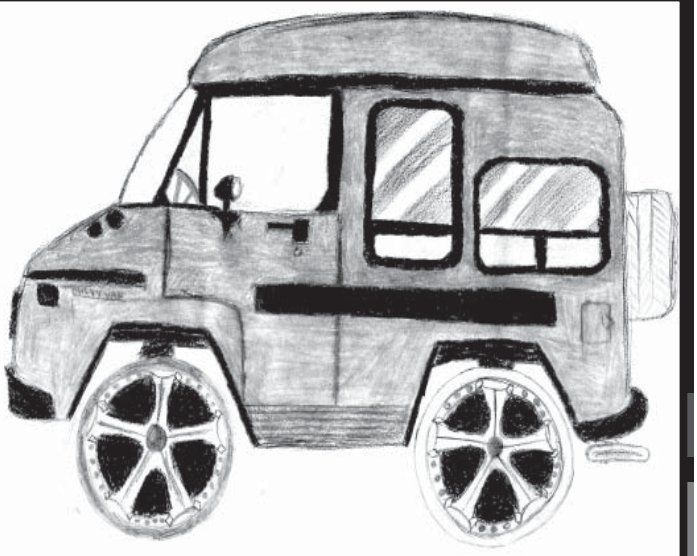
I have been a BWO writer and artist for nearly four years, and I am very grateful for the relationship we have developed over the years. The Beat has blossomed into the remarkable national publication that it is today, and I have sharpened my skills as a poet and storyteller. The Beat has given me the honor of having over fifty of me and my friends' pieces published in this wonderful magazine, when other publications wouldn't give us a chance. The Beat is the truth; they provide the proof.

Let's flash back to 2002. I was a 16-year-old resident at the boot camp- like Pacific Lodge Boys Home in Los Angeles. I was sent there from Sacramento County Juvenile Hall to do two years. I had done many years off and on between the hall and the boy's ranch. They were getting tired of my little crimes (Assault, Burglary, Grand Theft, etc.) so they sent me away to "teach me a lesson." To make a long story short, I learned about The Beat and I showcased my work like an audition. I made the part and became a regular BWO contributor.

I also read and studied the many heartfelt pieces composed by BEAT LEGENDS like E-Money, D'Wayne The Knowledge, Jason Tréas, and War Dog. I became fascinated by the mind and talents of those who made The Beat what it is today...

Listen

Listen to the world
Look at what's around you
Can you see people dying?
Read the newspaper
Do you see your friends dying?
Look at the obituaries
Who died today?
Read about the war
How many soldiers died today?
How many more have to die
Before we bring them home
How many families have to suffer?
How many moms have to cry?
Before we end this thing
How many votes does it take to impeach the President
Before he destroys the world as we know it?
Is Bush the anti-Christ?
Will he kill us all in the next three years?
When do we speak up?
When will they listen?
Or do they even care
Listen to the world.



That's My Word

This is just a reflective piece that I wrote to get something off of my chest. Initially, I had planned to make this a Q&A, but I chose instead to discuss a couple of topics that are important to me. It's been a very long time since I've written The Beat, so please bear with me and hear me out.

Lately, I've started the habit of reading the newspaper every day. I try to stay up on what's happening in the world. The government gets caught spying, the Vice-President shoots a friend, Bush doesn't know when to bring the troops home, etc. There's so much going on it's crazy.

Now that we murdered Tooky, what's next for the Terminator? Are we going to re-elect him? I'd hope not. What is the current state of the state? Where will California be in the next four years? What will we do to make Sacramento and the Bay Area a safe place to live? What will Sacramento Sheriff Lou Blanas do to bring down the murder rate? At least 10 people have been shot or stabbed to death in Sacramento in the last two weeks. And two of them were people I knew and befriended.

If the Sacramento county sheriffs spent as much energy as they do when they're beating us up in the jail and put it into preventing and solving murders, a lot of good people would still be alive and a lot of families wouldn't have to suffer. That's my word.

Teach

Understand my speak, do I make some sense
You can learn the truth at my expense
Even a foolish man can teach the world
And a wise man can be fooled
But I 'am not here to use you
I will never try to abuse you
I don't mean to preach
But I'm just here to teach
I reside in this jail cell
Stressin', going through hell
I committed minor crimes
Which led to major time
Should've listened when mama preached
Or paid attention when the instructor teached
But I kept it in the streets
Running game trying to eat
Sacramento, the state's capitol
Where I grinded to maintain capital
Where I stole from those who worked
Where I chose to put in work
Where I caught my first case
And received a slap in the face
I should've listened when mama preached
Or paid attention when the instructor teached

Reintroducing Myself To The Beat

JAMES SANTIAGO GONZALES *In earlier issues of* ***The Beat Without, James Gonzalez told an amazing story of escape — at least a kind of escape... In this piece, he gives us a sense of growing up. But he ends his story in such a place that all of us will be wanting to know how it comes out, and exactly what he means when he says he's serving a term of 59-L "for absolutely nothing." And that's only one of the mysteries about his story. Did he take poison on purpose, or by accident — and if on purpose, for what purpose? We'll all just have to wait for the answers to those questions when he again takes pen in hand and writes us from Salinas Valley State Prison.***

I wrote you a story recently about my escape from Salinas Valley State Prison, using the pen name "Santiago Gonzales." However, that is not my true name. I was introduced to The Beat Without by an inmate I met named "Easy" who said you writers at the "BWO" knew him as War Dog" (Israel Perez). Whatever the case is, I read your Beat magazine and decided to write my adventure to you ("The Escape," Parts I, II and III) solely for entertainment purposes. What I wrote to you is not even half the story.

The U.S Attorney in Arizona called me an expert at manipulating the legal system and said I got myself to Arizona to avoid serving the life sentence I was ordered to. I'm hoping some day to sit down and write my own autobiography, my own horror stories of prison and "survival" stories.

As I said, Israel Perez introduced me to The Beat Without, and although I have not yet heard from you from my first story entitled "My Escape," I have something I would like to tell the world if I could: my story of how I ended up in prison, why I'm still in prison after my parole date five years ago, and what I'm hoping for in my future.

My birth name is Jimmy Gonzales, or "James" for short. I adopted the name "Santiago" in Salinas Valley State Prison for my own reasons. With that, let me begin my story.

"Untitled"

I could have been free. In one instant, I stuck my foot in my mouth and altered the course of my life detrimentally. From the time I was eighteen years old to twenty one, I was in and out of the county jail for under the influence of PCP. I had never been to juvi, never been to CYA. That doesn't mean I was a good kid growing up. By all rights I should have been institutionalized growing up because I was sick and twisted! I just never got caught by the "authorities." I didn't say I never got caught. I never got caught by the people that lock you away and throw away the keys.

But anyhow, as I was saying, from the time I was eighteen to twenty-one I was in and out of the Santa Clara County Jail for 11550(B) PCP constantly. I would serve my time, get out on probation, violate probation with dirty urine samples, get sent back to court, etc... Then, I escaped one evening.

It was New Year's Eve, 1987. I volunteered to sneak out of the barracks at Elmwood, go to the fence where homeboy's ol' lady would give me some party items to take back for us to celebrate 1987! As it turned out, the deputies discovered I was missing and I went AWOL. I stayed free for nine months until I was caught in Southern California and returned on a Cessna airplane back to Santa Clara County. Upon my return to court to answer to the charge of "escape w/o force" (I only had 30 days left on my sentence), the Probation Department recommended that I receive one year in the county jail. Upon completion of that one year, I would be released totally free with no probation.

Well, the "homeboys" told me that prison is better. If I took a year in the county jail I would never be allowed to return to the farm where I escaped from. I would do the whole year downtown in the main jail which to me was the worst place with no windows to look outside. I took the homeboy's advice. I turned down the offer to plead guilty to a year, and I offered to plead guilty for a prison sentence, telling the judge, "Maybe it's like the military."

I needed an institution. My institution — "my family" — my dad had passed away in 1985 and I didn't have any structure in my life to go to. I grew up in Sunnyvale, California before I was introduced to the homies in San Jose. The judge gave me a sixteen-month prison term, with a three-year tail. "Parole." That's what killed me was the parole. No one warned me about parole. I still have a "D" number from that time.

In October 1987, I was taken to the Northern Reception Center at Vacaville and issued my D- number that has stuck to me like the stink of death to a corpse. No matter how I tried I couldn't shake this number off me after I paroled from prison. I should've took the one year county time. I would've got out of the county jail in or around April 1988 without any parole or probation. What a tragic mistake that was.

I got out of prison in October 1988, on parole, and from 1988 to 1991 I got parole violations twice! Then in 1991 I decided to go out with a bang! I threw myself the baddest goodbye crew world party ever, complete with thousand-dollar wardrobe, limousine service, first class hotel, fine dining etc... except it didn't go as planned so I ended up in prison again from 1990 to 1993!

December 1993 I get paroled from North Block San Quentin mainline, go back to San Jose, meet up with a homeboy and we begin shop lifting at department store's all over San Jose. I got caught the first time. The cop said I'm lucky it is the holidays because I'm on parole; he could take me to jail. All he did was give me a ticket, promise to appear in court and let me go. A week later both me and the homeboy got caught. Lucky break again! We both got a citation for petty theft and possession of drug paraphernalia. I told the homeboy, "I am so through!" Two petty thefts while on parole and a prior petty theft, I was going to prison for a long time.

I told the homies I had to go say goodbye to my mom who lived in Southern California. So I got on a bus and arrived at moms on Christmas morning, December 25, 1993. I met a little chica out there near mom's and kicked it with her, but soon I was back at my old habits shoplifting at department stores. I hit the same store for two weeks in a row! Finally I got caught. May 23,1994. I could have took a deal. The San Bernardino County District Attorney offered me a plea bargain. 16 months. But I was not charged with petty theft. I was charged with armed robbery for using a weapon to escape the scene. I got away but I was caught later. I wish I could've took the 16 months but I knew it didn't matter if I took 16 months or 16 years. I had a feeling this time I was gonna get hit if I went back to prison. I had to take my case to the box and I did. Of course I lost. They had me on video stealing.

The court sentenced me to nine years in prison on January 5, 1995. On January 26, 1995, I arrived at Tehachapi level 3 reception, as a parole violator with a new term. I had to be processed and classified. I only had 33 points. After two months at Tehachapi, I was placed on a bus to Corcoran level three. I arrived at Corcoran on April 12, 1995. ICC released me to the yard on April 18, 1995 and on May 2nd 1995 I felt the razorblade slide across my neck out on the yard. I got hit by the homies. Ha — homies! I had a near-death experience. I got bounced from Corcoran with a rope scar on my neck for the rest of my life. What I did to deserve that I'll never know. But I do know my paperwork is immaculate and I have no smut on paper at all even to this day.

Anyhow, I ended up finally at Mule Creek State Prison. I refused to go to any yard there and ended up in AD-Seg. While I was in AD-Seg in Mule Creek, somehow I ate or drank "Raid" insecticide. Enough of it, too. It stopped my breathing and I was gasping for hours barely hanging on to dear breath to breathe! After several hours of fighting to breathe, my breath returned and the burning started in my stomach, kidneys, and chest. I began vomiting violently in convulsions, bleeding internally. I yelled "Man Down!" repeatedly. Not one cop or C/O responded to my call. I lit my cell on fire!! Finally they removed me form my cell and let me speak to a doctor.

I had a parole date! But because of that incident in which they so grossly failed, I'm now doing life because of it. and I wish to God in heaven I could tell my story because I can't! They always stop me every time, some way, somehow! They always stop me when I start to tell my story. I had a parole date. 2002. I'm now serving 59 years to life for no reason. For absolutely nothing. I'll finish this later, they're on me!

(To be continued...)

BOBBY DIXON ***When most of us hear the words 'political prisoner' we think of someone who's down for a righteous cause. We think about someone fighting for what they believe in by any means necessary. This next writer deems himself a political prisoner and after reading the two pieces he sent us, we can see why. So many people of color are locked up that it's sickening. And in his first piece he makes some brilliant observations of the California Department of Corrections. He also throws in some uncanny comparisons that when you read them, will have you like, "Damn, this guy surely knows what he's talking about." We throw these labels around that place false images of our young people in the minds of those who have the most power. Labels such as 'repeat offender' and 'career criminal'. Yet when the time comes for us to take responsibility for putting an end to the 'repeat' and 'career' in those labels, we fail time and time again. Quality rehabilitation doesn't exist in this state, or even in this country. We lock all our problems up, hoping that if we leave the 'monster' under the bed, we'll never have to deal with him again. But what if that was your child? What if we lived in a land where Black people were the majority and White people made up 55 percent of the prison population in this country? Would we still use the old draconian "sweep 'em under the rug" method? Well, Bobby Dixon lets us know his take on things as he writes from the California Department of Corrections in Vacaville, CA. And frankly, we think he has a very good argument.***

The judicial and penal system's policies and concern, with successful rehabilitation of youth and adults is about as responsible as would be a plastic surgeon who drops a bus of people with burned faces off at a clinic and leaves them to operate on themselves. A few of them may succeed at improving their looks; others would become even more disfigured.

Cease Profanities

Everyone who knows Bobby Marion Dixon knows that he is a politically involved Black man. His goal is to bring young blacks together in love and respect for each other and to have them strive after the education that is so needed in order to get ahead in the world today.

We know for a fact that as Black Panther party members all over the world, the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. would want us as brothers and sisters to teach our children that.

Profanity is a mild form of insanity that holds a mighty obsession over many Black Americans. Consider this mildly insane tendency to use profanity? Is there really a logical reason that would justify the practice of profanity?

Does profanity make you any more a woman or man of character?
Would you enjoy hearing your mother, sister, wife
On the other hand, daughters use profanity?
Would you advise your children to cultivate the habit of cursing or using profanity?
Do you really think that it makes you cool as a rapper or a member of the hip-hop nation?

As a freedom fighter, comrade, political prisoner and member of the Black Panther party. I cry out to appeal to clergy and community at large to influence our youth not to use profanity. We can now say the 'N' word is even profanity.

This message is from a book that soon to come from our comrade Bobby Marlon Dixon. However his message is to the people. Lets give him support. One love with unity always with respect to the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. May his soul rest in Peace.

CDC Labels Youngsters 'Habitual Offenders,' Provides No Treatment

After the intentional and deliberate murder of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. young African descendants in American became even more of an endangered people.

There are 166,355 people incarcerated in California's correctional facilitates. Approximately 55 percent of those imprisoned are of African descent. An alarmingly high number of individuals belonging to this social group have been in and out of penal institutions since childhood. America calls them either habitual offenders or career criminals.

For many years, I have been disappointed tremendously because of the California judicial and penal system's use of the term "habitual". It is hypocritical that this same institution had never offered a sincere approach to counseling programs for the hundreds of thousands labeled as habitual offenders. In any other area of human activity that we label habitual, people are automatically perceived to have lost the strength to be responsible when it comes to certain activities.

The Oxford American Dictionary defines "habit" as 1) A settled way of behaving, something done frequently and almost without thinking; 2) Something that is hard to give up, especially an addiction to narcotics.

The system labels a type of offender as habitual, yet proceeds to completely ignore emotional, psychological and social implications of the label. In other words, it is like a doctor diagnosing a patient with a chronic ailment and doing nothing to help the patient, not even giving any meaningful self-help advice.

What is ever more tragic is that hundreds of thousands of children and young teens are emotionally, psychologically and socially ignored by the judicial and penal systems in the state of California, so that often their delinquency evolves into adult habitual criminality.

Unfortunately, unsuspecting parents tend to believe that their children are receiving counseling, etc. during their stays in youth penal facilities. For the vast majority of children and teens, no help is offered. They are merely being isolated from society for brief, unproductive periods. With no love from the family or leadership from people in their community, many turn to crime and become gang members — both for emotional and financial support.

The judicial and penal system's policies and concern, with successful rehabilitation of youth and adults is about as responsible as would be a plastic surgeon who drops a bus of people with burned faces off at a clinic and leaves them to operate on themselves. A few of them may succeed at improving their looks; others would become even more disfigured.

The majority, however, would remain the same, feeling as though they have no idea where to begin and therefore are left with an even more debilitating feeling of hopelessness. This is the racism that exists within the California Department of Corrections. Even correctional officers of African descent, resulting from a long history of oppression.

I appeal and cry out to all my Black Panther Party members in the U.S.A. not to allow our youth's lives to be in vain, to allow them to suffer in prison or die at the hands of the pigs. We must save our children.

It's my request that political prisoners and prisoners of war reach out to all of the youth in prison and the outside world. Remember the young people and the children are our future. I welcome all response from people and all my comrades, sisters and brothers. So please answer soon. Power to the people, with one love always, in revolution of the mind.

Dear Youthful Reader

NATHAN THOMAS ***Sometimes people are so smart and have such a broad vocabulary that it's hard for us to make out what they're saying. It sounds good and we get some ideas, but all in all, we can't understand everything that's being said. This next writer speaks of the idea of rebelling and acquiescing. And while reading through his letter titled, 'Dear Youthful Reader,' we wondered if he was really writing a letter to our youthful readers or if he wanted us to interpret what he was saying to our youthful readers. For one, if we're going to write a letter to our youthful readers, we must express ourselves in a way that they understand. Most of our youthful readers will probably read this and let it pass over their heads, for even though it is some great writing, most youthful readers don't have a vocabulary as refined as this one. So keep that in mind next time you write to 'our youthful readers.' He's writing from Calipatria State Prison in Calipatria, CA. His poem is a little easier to understand and it's also incredible, so please read on and see if you can make what he's saying out better than we can.***

If a young man, caught up in a cycle of carelessness, consequence, rage and regret were to ask himself what exactly it is within him that won't let him listen to the lesson of reason (that lesson being the world's wordless instruction only open to reflection), what might his answer be? In other words, why is it that "being good" feels like betrayal to true self? Why, like selling-out?

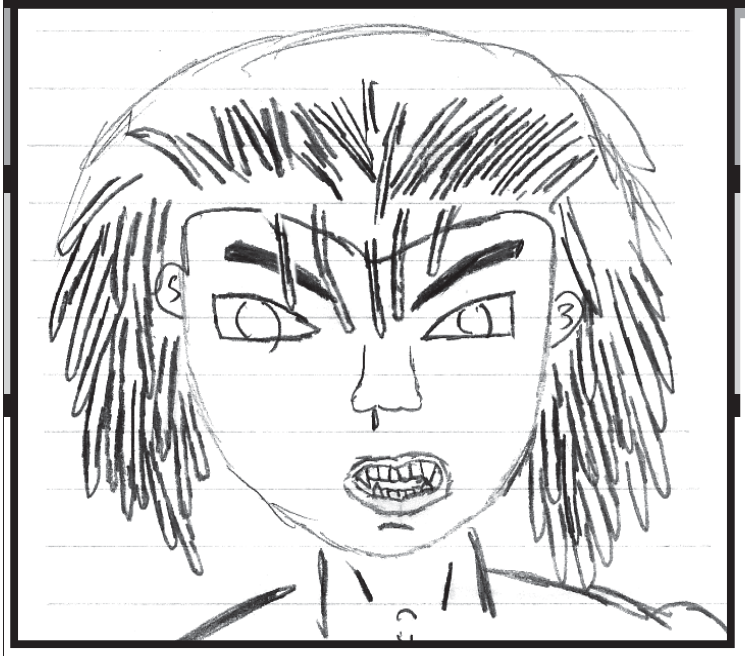
To answer this question correctly is the first and most important step toward "the boy becoming the man". For a firm hand upon that which has power only as a faint suggestion of indistinct ideas (its word whispering for seizing what's pleasing and having immediacy as its primacy) can and must be grabbed a hold to remold the old "seize what will please" into a deeper reaching notion, a further seeing vision of what idea, what approach, what disposition, alone and only, must be seized and made ones own in order that the man (now no longer a boy but a master and lover of life) may be truly pleased, in order that "doing good" no longer feels wrong but becomes worthy of one's highest mightiness, his love and respect.

Thus, to repeat, the question must be posed by the young man unto his heart: "Why art thou so hard, my heart?" And, again, the answer's all-important. But what might the answer be? Is it that the heart is hard because life is hard, the heart being hardened rather wanting life easy? Is it, instead, that the heart isn't hard at all, but only pretends to be, puts a shell of armor between itself and the world so not to be stricken by its flight? Or, at last, is it that the heart is neither hard nor soft but either one or the other, whether bad or fair weather? Do not all three have the ring of verity? Do not all these, in each their truth; shine light upon the fact that "The Beat Within" can't beat the conflict within but by understanding the nature of conflict and that these suggest that conflict lies between the fact that necessity demands severity and the fact we, thus, acquiesce, though reluctantly (for we know that "severity", "rigidity", "inflexibility" in the heart of love, love being founded in the flux, and, thus, feeling that anything less than "free-flowing" is alien and contrary) are stupidity and love's enemy, that is, love anomie? And here we come near. It's in the idea freedom that resides (hides) the answer. Yes, it is in freedom that's the key.

To sum what's come thus far: The heart of the young rebel chooses rebellion because he supposes that conduct according to "the system" is conduct contrary to his freedom. With this "logic" in mind the young rebel justifies not becoming part of good society — he decides that such would be to sell his soul, and he won't buy in to what he sees to be the slavery suffered by those who've made their life all alliance to "the machinery of money." –But what's then left? Only anarchy… a fictional freedom… lawlessness.

Now I know that you know that there's no such thing as lawlessness. Oh no! Right exists, and consequence never fails informing the wronger of right that he's not right (if even that's so slight as being but an inmost sense of perpetual dissatisfaction, disaffectedness, discontent, at the sight of the plight of being infinite).

What then, at this turning point of the dialectic between boyhood and manhood, is the question needing answering? Undoubtedly it is this: "How do I reconcile the apparently irreconcilable realities of the heart's want of freedom, on the one hand, and the fact that natural law of things makes any hope of unconditioned freedom a ridiculous notion (for consequence punishes mightily any wrong application of the idea "freedom"), on the other hand? -and the answer to this question (which must be answered by only oneself and for oneself will be in the following spirit: Life is tough, and so must be the man; but the toughness of man must be of mind, and that by refusing to whine or complain about "what is or might have been", instead knowing that the nature of things must, and do, and will continue to, deprive an individual and mortal man of most of his wants, and love itself being for overcoming. So, instead, reverence is had for the striving itself (in knowledge that by only it has anything any worth)… in obviation of all complaint.



Can't Complain

The truth exists evident and plain,
Men are sure to endure plenty pain.
But must this then indict the brain?
When only we countenance our self to complain.
For to tolerate this is to go insane,
It's to put off taking control of the rein,
It's being creator of one's worst bane.
Do we not know what here has the reign?
By now don't we see there exists no gain?
So why then wonderment gets to feign?
Why grow madness when things go in wane?
I for one refuse no to design.
Knowing what's life, I'll have at it quite fain.
Here's my deep disposition, its logic, in main:
I shall not bear the devil's stain,
Evils won't be for me life's drain.
I'll perfect my talents, knowing to train;
And do this gladly, feeling no strain.

VICIOUS ***Listen closely, pay attention, and please don't plagiarize this next writer's raps. We feel like we have to attach a list of instructions to Vicious' creations because they are off the charts. And for all of you that disagree with the whole hip-hop movement and what it stands for, we advise you to read these next three platinum hits, for this is what rap is all about. Putting experiences, situations, feelings, words, ideas, struggles, and everything else all down on paper using rhyme. And man, does this guy know how to rhyme? The way he strings words together is amazing as he talks about his struggles with incarceration. When we read stuff like this, we become saddened by the fact that so much of our country's talent and potential is locked behind bars. He's writing from Mule Creek State Prison in Ione, CA. And from reading these incredible works of art, we know we'll be impatiently waiting by the mailbox to hear more from, Vicious. So when are you going to sign the record deal?***

Society's Menace

(Hook)
Society look at what you made,
Now don't you hate me cause you made me
You made me bear the pain and wear the chains of prison slavery
For years I been engaged, building rage and goin' crazy
But one day you'll have to face me
And you'll hate me cause you made me

(Verse 1)
Blame society who made this menace
Serving ten years of a seventeen year sentence
How the hell am I suppose to be rehabilitated
Every night my mind is full of murder premeditating
Society look what this prison life taught me
I'm even worse that when the state first brought me
It's like a trap, locked in a cage with my enemies
Kill or be killed, either way it's the end of me
Riding with two strikes plagued with insanity
I want my vengeance but fear losing family
Entirely, lyrics, and poetry form my diary
My eyes of desire looking fiery red and irie
Admiring the pitch black skies and the sunset
Staring in awe like it's something I've never done yet
Can't stand the thought of doing life in this institution
So heavily burdened that I'd embrace my own execution
This killa mind state should be strictly for military
Not for an enraged man sickly in solitary
Dealing with his first heavy dose of suppression
Knowing his only love is now a lost possession
Show me your psychopaths, these are your lunatics?
Lost inside my pupil's I saw Christ on the crucifix
Take me off the streets saying I'm violent and crazy
Force feeding me experimental drugs that kill my babies
Take a good look at the real prison system
Then tell me who's the criminal, tell me who's the victim.

Too Heavy For Heaven

(Verse 1)
I'm trying so hard to be Godly and righteous
I'm analyzed so critically of sin, I'm feeling lifeless
I'll pray to be set free and accepted by the Lord
Cause I'm trapped by my conscience like a prisoner of war
I'm fighting the evil that for years has grown inside of me,
Becoming a part of me
Witnessed death 'till it's hardened me
To the average man I'm sick, cold, vicious and inhumane
But my heart's just been accustomed to shutting off the pain
But now my soul feels heavy as I carry all this bitterness
My heart has never known any mercy or forgiveness
My family, memories and dreams have all been shattered and scattered
In the darkness for my blinded eyes to gather
My agony and misery seem to have no end
Read poetry and lyrics that my anguished spirit penned
It's written in my own blood, capture my pain
I got this pen hooked to tubes with needles strapped to my veins
I've come a long way cut the depths of hell
With every burnt scar telling you a story itself

(Verse 2)
We all unclean, all our righteousness is like filthy rags
My sweetest fruits will make the lowest soul in heaven gag
My best works valued as dirt, my rancid life is full of filth,
everything I touch I stain with bloody hands of guilt
Men judge me, they words like hail crushing hope and trust
Destroying the roses and the man who grew out of dust
With grief I'm acquainted, I'm rejected and despised
Today I repent in the event of my untimely demise
While you slept, my soul wept till my eyes had the shadow of death
The graves wait for me, meth and liquor corrupting my breath
Can't find no love or peace to quench my own desire
I lay me down to sleep into a blazing bed of fire
When will I find happiness, or less, a place to rest?
Without having to take a couple bullets through my chest
My mother, my brothers and sisters are a distant way from me
I'm finding and dreaming of a woman who'll love me faithfully
But what could she see in me?
No pleasure in being me
I'm locked in the pen, ain't guaranteeing they freeing me

Tears Of Blood

(Hook)
I'm not the same man that I once used to be
My family got problems getting used to me
I've been alone on my own through the highs and lows
Doing time is just a part of this life I chose
With the streets come drugs, with the drugs came crime
Without love came pain, from my heart came rhymes
This is all I have, this is all I know
Only tattoos, scars, tears of blood to show

(Verse 1)
It's a shame what the streets made of mama's baby boy
She remembers when the simplest things would bring her baby joy
But those days are long gone as a child with no concern
I've strayed and now I'm way beyond the point of no return
And though I want to change I remain painfully afflicted
I'm insane and bound up in the chains of drug addiction
It's hard to manage; I'm seeing my ravaged life in a cloud of smoke
Helpless as it vanish with my dreams, self-esteem and hope
No one understands this poor young man on his own
But my struggling and suffering is something they'll never know
How could I survive born and raised a slave to failure
Inhaling poison vapors of criminal behavior
Poverty stricken living off minimal rations
There's no excuse I know I'm responsible for my actions
But these circumstances heavily influenced my decisions
And getting paid was all a street made villain could envision
At the time I was blind it wasn't a crime I was committing to greed
Cause I was dying and all that occupied my mind was supplying my need
Surviving by any means that I had deemed necessary
The do or die mentality of a predatory mercenary
I bear a heart that's burden-weary trying hard to silence my grief
Because I know that in this world
There ain't a soul out there crying for me

(Verse 2)
Tears of blood pouring down like crimson rain
From bloodshot eyes, know nothing if it isn't pain
I wonder if it is in vain that I've led this life of sin
Or if God will grant me heaven for the hell through which I've been
I've failed to comprehend my existence at certain times
At first my burdened mind could find no rest from the dirt and crime
Until I bled a tear upon some paper with words that rhymed
A verse for the cursed time I found myself living in
A verse worth a thousand cries from hell through my imprisonment
All my deepest feelings went into an art that never paid me
Yet I could not forsake the bars
That this scarred up heart had gave me
Cause through the drama and the madness the pen was always there
Through the trauma and the sadness and the depths of my despair
As I mingle my drink with tears and steady get my high on
I see the pen's my closest friend,
This sheet's the shoulder which I cry on
I ain't got a grave or plot to die on, not a single thing to my name
Just the bloodstained streets and walls with krylon paint left to brandish my fame
I've been true to the game but the game is full of itself
And a man don't get paid for the pain or the bullets he's felt
Nor for the time that he's spent in a cell, locked up and miserable
Slipping through the hands of death as mama's walking miracle

A Best Friends Letter

Hey there kid, it's been some time since we've talked.
I know you're crying.
I know life is hard and prison sucks
And I can tell inside you're sighing.
You're not afraid to bleed if the cause is good.
You're like a solider on the line.
You're mind is like an M-16
With ammunition that's hard t find.
You wear the scars of battles fought,
Tattoos beneath your skin.
And when you think you've lost you don't give up
And in the end you really win.
Do you know why you're crying — I know I do,
See I'm that voice inside your heart
I'm that silent thing that guides your dreams
To the light when times get dark.
I feed you hope to fight despair
Without me you're bound to lose.
I can comfort body, mind and soul
But only you can fill your shoes.
I can guide advice about battle plans
And how to shake that fear you feel.
But I can also guide you through fantasies
When the pain becomes too real.
You've lost and won, stood tall and proud,
Never hung your head in shame.
You've fought even when you stood alone
With only me inside your brain.
Since you were born into this world
You can trust that I was there.
Watched you like parents do
'Cause I'm a friend that really cares.
And believe this now I'm here with you
All the way until the end.
I'm that thing you call a conscience.
You're one and only honest friend.

ROBERT SHIM ***When this next writer says, "I've been a long time reader of your publication and I feel it's time for me to share one of my poems," our only response is, "What took you so long?" And you'll see why after reading his brilliant poem titled 'A Best Friends Letter.' In this poem he personifies something as being his best friend and that something remains a mystery until it's revealed at the end of the poem. What could his best friend be? Is it someone in particular? Or maybe a drug he was addicted to? If you want to find out, you'll surely have to read and when you do find out, you'll want to read it again to witness how genius this concept is. He's writing from Salinas Valley State Prison in Soledad, CA, and we're hoping he writes again. Thank you for the support and could you not take so long to 'share one of your poems' next time. We enjoy your writing.***

I've been in and out of the system for years. Been a drug addict for almost 8 years and learned only one thing, that one thing is that prison isn't for most of us that are here.

Beat

I've been a long time reader of your publication and I feel it's time for me to share one of my poems. I'm 28 years old today, July 4th and the last birthday I spent in the free world was my thirteenth birthday. I've been in and out of the system for years. Been a drug addict for almost 8 years and learned only one thing, that one thing is that prison isn't for most of us that are here.

I'm about a semester from a bachelor's degree in psychology, but I've been too busy coming to prison to finish that one simple task. This poem I'm going to share this time is what I read to myself when I feel like giving up. It's titled "A Best Friends Letter"

ADRIAN ***We've always been fans of inspirational poems, so this next one was totally on time. If you're 'looking for a change,' then we suggest you read his poem. Writing from Texas Department of Corrections in Beeville, TX, he offers hope with his words. And in a land where people are getting shot everyday, babies are being taken, and drugs are polluting our streets, this is more than needed. We know that the struggles in Texas are not a far contrast from the struggles in California, so we're sure the readers will feel this piece. We'd keep going with this introduction, but like he states in his poem, "It's time for a change."***

Looking For A Change

In my mind's eyes I'm just a number
Looking for someone to keep me from going under
But in my life all I see is darkness and greed
It seems the ones that had my back are out to bury me.
They're full of hate and jealousy 'cause I'm still breathing.
It's a cruel world everybody's plotting and scheming.
I ask myself when will it all end only heaven knows so.
Roll a blunt to lose my thought in the cloud of smoke
But this lifestyle got me losing sleep,
It's crazy looking for a way to make it out the game.
Can anyone blame me for spitting about the game in my songs
I got them listening now maybe they can tell what's wrong
With the youth of today,
It's still the same everybody just looking for a change…
I see the future and it's crystal clear,
Kids looking still taking penitentiary chances burying peers
Getting closer to living in a land of hell
Being forgotten by the streets lost in a jail cell
When will we open our eyes and see time to strategize
And make it out the hood to finally see a life
Full of peaceful dreams and quiet nights
No more daydreaming killing our own kind
We can make it if you just stop and listen.
Picture a place where all our women ain't witches
And ain't no snitches
Trying to lock us up in chains
'Cause we all looking for a change.
I close my eyes and make a wish
Dear Lord take me away from this world so heartless
Maybe then they'll get their life in focus
And I know right now things seem hopeless
Just never let 'em see your head down
And if you fall get right back up and go another round
'Cause they love to see you on the floor bleeding
Locked up in a cell losing your mind addicted to screaming
It's such a crazy time we're living in
So I ask the Lord to forgive me for all the sins
I committed as an adolescent to the youth
Learn life's lessons and never stay from the truth
In ya' heart
Even tho' life seems rough there's always light after the dark
And keep looking for a change

Getting closer to living in a land of hell
Being forgotten by the streets lost in a jail cell

…through the drama and the madness the pen was always there
Through the trauma and the sadness and the depths of my despair
As I mingle my drink with tears and steady get my high on
I see the pen's my closest friend,
This sheet's the shoulder which I cry on

check out the rest of Vicious' BWO piece on page 58